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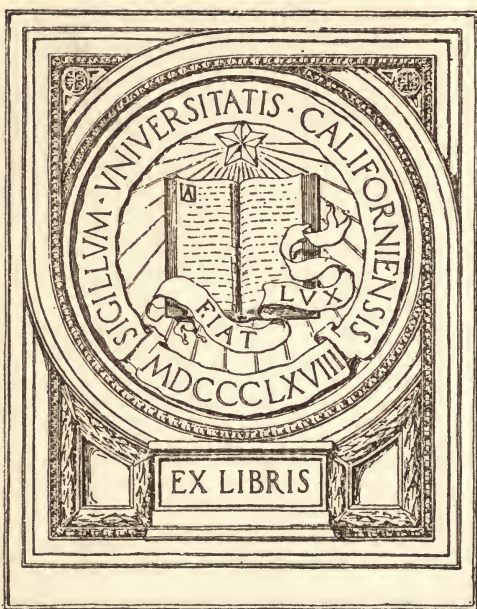
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THE VILLAGE LAWYER

BY
ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS



THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA



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The Village Lawyer

A Comedy Drama in Four Acts

BY

Arthur Lewis Tubbs

*Author of "Farm Folks," "Home Ties," "The Fruit of
His Folly," "The Finger of Scorn," etc.*



PHILADELPHIA
THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

1916

TO THE
MANAGER

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The Village Lawyer

CAST OF CHARACTERS

SETH BARRETT	<i>the lawyer</i>
DAVID CONANT	<i>a political "boss"</i>
JAMES FERGUSON	. . . . .	<i>his right hand man</i>
ALAN SPENCER	. . . . .	<i>a summer boarder</i>
SAM DILL	. . . . .	<i>a much married man</i>
DAN BRIGHT	. . . . .	<i>learning to be a lawyer</i>
HELEN CONANT	. . . . .	<i>David's daughter</i>
ISABEL UNDERWOOD	. . . . .	<i>from gay Broadway</i>
ANGIE BARRETT	. . . . .	<i>sister of Seth</i>
MRS. DILL	. . . . .	<i>not afraid to speak her mind</i>
LOBELIA	. . . . .	<i>a household factotum</i>

TIME OF PLAYING —About two hours and a half

SYNOPSIS

- ACT I.—Seth Barrett's office, on an afternoon in August. Love and politics.
- ACT II.—Same as Act I, about a week later. The letters.
- ACT III.—Home of Seth Barrett, the next evening. The heart of a woman.
- ACT IV.—Same as Acts I and II, the following day. The winning hand.
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STORY OF THE PLAY

Seth Barrett, a young lawyer, is running for district attorney against David Conant, a political "boss" of long standing. Conant is incensed at Seth's refusal to withdraw his name from the ticket. Being unscrupulous and unrelenting toward those who thwart his purpose, he commands Seth, who is desperately in love with his daughter, Helen, to cease paying his attentions to her. Seth, early in his college career, sowed a few wild oats and became acquainted with gay Broadway and its habitués. He soon awoke to the folly of it all and quite forgets the incidents associated with that period. In some way, however, Conant learns of this, and negotiates with an actress, who knew Seth at this time, in an attempt to make public a greatly magnified account of Seth's past, in order to injure him politically. But despite Conant's iron will and underhanded methods, love finds a way. Seth is not easily frightened, is firm in his purpose, and plays the game so fairly that Conant becomes ashamed of his actions and relents. Interwoven with the stormy courtship of the village lawyer, a quieter, but none the less earnest, romance runs its course.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

SETH BARRETT. A good-looking, manly young country lawyer, about twenty-eight or thirty, of a jovial, easy-going disposition, but with plenty of vim and spirit. Well educated and mentally keen and sharp-witted. Not easily ruffled or frightened, but still whole-hearted and sympathetic. He wears a plain, neat summer business suit; may be the same throughout, or a light suit in the first, second and fourth acts and a dark one in the third.

DAVID CONANT. Typical rural political leader and boss, about fifty years of age; short, stockily built; sharp eyes, stern countenance; severe, unscrupulous and unrelenting toward those who cross his will. Wears plain business suit.

JAMES FERGUSON. Might be tall and thin, in contrast to Conant, of about the same age. A cringing sycophant, occasionally daring to "speak up," but evidently afraid of Conant, and in his political power. Plain summer suit.

ALAN SPENCER. Dapper young city fellow, of about twenty-three or thereabouts; handsome, well dressed in neatly fitting summer clothes, with rather fancy shirts and neckties, but all in good taste. He is of the somewhat "sporty," flashy type, accustomed to the lights and the life of the big city, but by no means fast or offensive. Should be in the good will of the audience.

SAM DILL. Little old man, much devoted to his domineering wife, and willing to bear all she puts upon him for the sake of an occasional smile. He is about sixty, with thin gray hair, beard or chin whiskers. Comic rural type, without being a caricature. Wears plain, somewhat shabby and none too tidy suit. May be a little better dressed in ACT III.

DAN BRIGHT. Smart boy of fourteen or fifteen, with all of a real boy's fondness for exciting reading and athletic sport. Active, a bit "fresh," but the kind of youngster one likes. Neat suit, showing something of rough usage.

PROPERTIES

HELEN CONANT. Refined, attractive girl of about nineteen, rather delicate and timid, showing the effect of severe home discipline, but withal sweet and winsome. Pretty summer costumes, not elaborate.

ISABEL UNDERWOOD. Tall, stately young woman, somewhat past the point of girlhood ; handsome, of a rather bold and conspicuous type of beauty, but not without a suggestion of gentleness and refinement. Evidently the victim of influences and surroundings not conducive to the development of the finer qualities. She wears two or three different costumes, all rather elaborate and fancy, with showy hats, flowers, some jewelry, parasol, hand-bag, etc.

ANGIE BARRETT. Ingénue character ; pretty, vivacious girl of seventeen or eighteen. She wears simple but attractive and becoming light summer costumes, hat, etc.

MRS. DILL. Character part. Middle-aged woman of village gossip variety ; talks very fast, has quick, energetic movements. Somewhat "bossy" and domineering, but not disagreeably so. For comic effect may be considerably larger than her husband—or vice versa, he being much the larger, making her authority over him the more funny by contrast. She is plainly dressed, in first act in ordinary calico or gingham. ACTS II and IV, much the same. ACT III, a better dress, with a touch of color. Small hat, with feather ; comical effect.

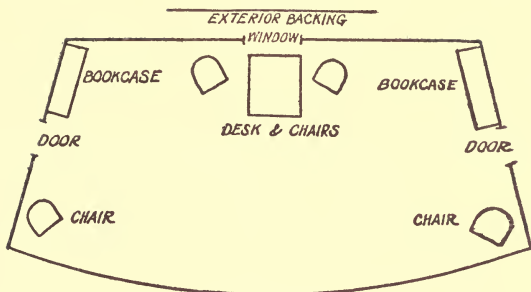
LOBELIA. Colored character part. Stout, "squatty" figure ; the jovial, lovable "old mammy" type. Calico dress, apron, etc., as appropriate to time and scene.

PROPERTIES

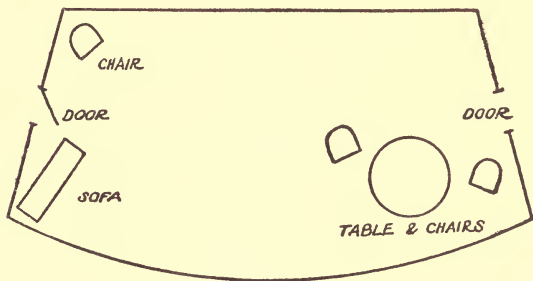
Law books. Cheap, paper-covered dime novel. Calendar, several legal posters and notices on wall. Papers, legal documents, etc., on desk and in drawers. Telephone. Waste paper basket with contents. Pieces of money. Cigars. Postage stamps. Small bundle of letters, stamped, addressed and opened, tied together with string or ribbon ; several other letters similar in size and appearance, also stamped and addressed, but unopened. Dining-table, white cloth, red spread, few dishes. Broom. Fancy work. Palm leaf fan. Diamond engagement ring. Several grocery store packages.

SCENE PLOTS

ACTS I, II, AND IV



SCENE.—SETH BARRETT'S LAW OFFICE. Entrances R. and L. Window in flat, c. Desk near window, and bookcases up R. and L., where convenient. Chairs on both sides of desk, and in other parts of stage.



ACT III. Combined dining and living room in home of Seth Barrett. Well furnished, with easy chairs, couch, etc. A dining-room table L. C. Entrances R. and L.

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ACT I

SCENE.—*Plain room, the law office of SETH BARRETT. Door to street R., to another room L.; window in flat. Desk up C., near window; large easy chair near it, several other chairs about stage; law books on desk and shelf or bookcase; calendar, legal notices, etc., on wall; the typical furnishings of young lawyer's office in country town. Discover DAN BRIGHT seated in easy chair, with feet on table, asleep. On his lap is a large law book, inside of which is a dime novel. Door and window are open. After pause enter MRS. DILL, R.; she stands a moment regarding DAN.*

MRS. D. Say! Wake up. (*Goes and rouses DAN, noticing dime novel.*) You lazy thing, why don't you wake up 'n' tend t' business?

DAN (*waking, sleepily*). Huh? What? (*Recognizes MRS. D.*) Oh, how do, Mis' Dill? Where'd you come from? (*Rises, closing book with novel inside.*)

MRS. D. What difference does it make where I come from? What I want t' know is, where's Seth? I want t' see him.

DAN. You mean Mr. Barrett?

MRS. D. I mean Seth Barrett, that's who I mean. Land, I guess you needn't think I'm goin' t' start in callin' him "Mister," if he is a lawyer 'n' runnin' for office. I guess I've known Seth Barrett all his life, sence he was a baby, 'n' his folks b'fore him, 'n' I ain't goin' t' start in callin' him "Mister" at this late day. Where is he?

DAN. I d' know, exactly. Went down the street a while ago. Said he'd be back in half an hour. More 'n that now.

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MRS. D. 'N' he left you t' run things, I suppose? A pretty one you be,—read'n' dime novels. Oh, I saw it. Think you'll learn t' be a lawyer read'n' that trash?

DAN. Well, law's too dry. Have t' take it in small doses, 'r it'd choke me. Anything I can do for y', Mis' Dill?

MRS. D. You? The idee! I guess they ain't. I want t' see "Mister" Barrett—on legal business. (*To herself, with determination.*) I've stood it jest as long 's I'm goin' to.

DAN. Well, then set down to it. (*Places chair R. C.*) Here's a chair.

MRS. D. Don't you get impudent, young man. I'll tell Seth Barrett I saw you read'n' that dime novel.

(*She sits.*)

DAN. 'Tain't a dime novel—only cost a nickel. Besides, he wouldn't care. Reads 'em himself.

MRS. D. Likely story, that is. A lawyer read'n' dime novels!

DAN. Sure. He kep' mine the other day when I wanted it. Said it was great. (*Shows her novel.*) Look—"Perfidious Pete; or, the Bandit Band of Bloody Gulch." Don't that sound exciting?

MRS. D. It sounds scandalous, for a boy like you t' be storin' his mind up with. Seth Barrett ought t' have more sense. I guess if the Democrat c'mmittee knew he reads that trash! Goin' t' run for District Attorney, I hear?

DAN. Well, if he does he'll get 'lected, spite o' "Perfidious Pete," I'll bet.

MRS. D. Huh! I guess "Perfidious Pete" won't have s' much t' say about it as Dave Conant will. Of course, I'd like t' see Seth get it,—but Dave Conant! He's lord of all he surveys around here, 'n' when it comes t' politics—well, y' might as well try t' beat—I d' know what—'s him. (*Rises, restlessly.*) But I can't hang around here all day. I come on business, 'n' I should think he'd ought t' be here t' tend to it.

DAN. Sure there's nothing I can do, Mis' Dill?

MRS. D. I guess not; not unless you grant divorces.

DAN. Oh! You want another divorce—from y'r husband?

MRS. D. Land, who would I want it from? Think I want

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a divorce from the town pump? You'd make a pretty lawyer, you would. As for "another," what do y' mean by that? Ain't had one yet; but I've made up my mind to get one now. I've stood his shiftlessness as long 's I'm goin' t'.

(ANGIE BARRETT *appears at window, putting head in.*)

ANGIE. Good-morning. How d' do, Mrs. Dill? Hello, Dan. Seth in?

DAN. Nope. Out. Be back in a minute. Come on in.

ANGIE. All right, I will. (*Disappears.*)

MRS. D. Pretty gay piece, if she is his sister. Guess he ain't none too strict with her.

(*Enter ANGIE, R.*)

ANGIE. Why, Mrs. Dill, I'm surprised to see you here—in a lawyer's office. No legal business, I hope?

MRS. D. Well, if it is, that's my business, ain't it?

ANGIE. Why, of course. Excuse me. I didn't mean to pry into it. I was only joking.

MRS. D. Well, I guess a divorce ain't no joking matter. Oh, yes, you might 's well know—it ain't no secret, 'n' I'd jest as soon it be told, seein' it's come to it. I've stood it jest as long 's I'm goin' t'. Me 'n' Sam's got t' part.

ANGIE. Oh, Mrs. Dill, I'm sorry to hear that. I always thought Mr. Dill such a nice man.

MRS. D. Oh, you did! Well, bein' nice don't buy bread 'n' butter 'n' pay taxes. I'd ruther a man 'd have some gumption 'n t' jest be "nice."

ANGIE. Why—yes; but—really, don't you think it could be patched up——

MRS. D. No, I don't. It's be'n patched 'n' patched, till they ain't room for another patch. No, I've made up my mind 'n' I mean t' have it. I've stood it long enough.

DAN. Don't blame y', Mis' Dill. A man as lazy as your husband is——

MRS. D. Well, I guess it ain't your place t' criticize him, a little upstart like you. Huh! You'd better look t' home.

DAN. Whew!

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ANGIE. There, Dan, now will you be good? But I'll be going, and stop on my way back. I'm just going down to the post-office.

MRS. D. S'pose you expect a letter from that city feller.

ANGIE. M'm—well, if I do, it'll be my letter, so you needn't worry about it.

(Laughs mischievously and exits R.)

MRS. D. If she was my girl, I'd give her a good spankin'. Such impudence. *(She goes up to window, looks out toward L. DAN is R., by door.)* I declare, here comes Dave Conant. Looks like a thunder-cloud, too. I wonder what's up now.

DAN. Oh, I suppose something ain't gone t' suit him. If y' cross y'r leg the ways he don't think y' ought to, he gets on his ear. S'pose he's heard about Mr. Barrett's running for District Attorney.

MRS. D. Mebbe that's it. Well, I guess he can't scare Seth Barrett.

DAN. You bet he can't. He'll try it, though.

(DAVID CONANT passes window; glances in, then enters R.)

DAVID *(to DAN)*. Where's your boss?

DAN. You mean Mr. Barrett?

DAVID. Of course I mean Mr. Barrett. Who else should I mean? Where is he?

DAN. I d' know, Mr. Conant, jest exactly. He went up the street. Be back soon, I guess.

DAVID. Well, I want to see him. *(Notices MRS. D.)* Oh, good-afternoon, Mrs. Dill. Patronizing the law nowa-days?

MRS. D. *(seated L. C.)*. Mebbe. Be you?

DAVID. Well, if I am, that's my business.

MRS. D. And if I am, that's my business, Dave Conant. Guess I've got jest as much right here as you have. *(He glares at her.)* Oh, you needn't think you can scare me, if you be the richest man in the county 'n' think you own everybuddy around here jest b'cause you got a little money. Good land, I knew you when you didn't have a cent—'n' I d' know's you would have now 'f you'd been very p'tic'lar how you got it.

DAVID. Say, see here, my fine woman, you'd better be

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careful how you let your tongue run. Even a proverbial gossip may go too far.

MRS. D. So? Well, if I'm "proverbial," let me give you a proverb: "Give a rascal rope enough 'n' he'll hang himself." That's a good one for you t' think over, I reckon.

DAVID. Pooh! Even an insult from you isn't worth noticing. (*To DAN.*) I'll be back. (*Goes R.*)

DAN. All right, Mr. Conant. I'll tell him you was here.

(*DAVID, R., is about to exit, when he meets SETH BARRETT, who enters breezily. DAVID comes back to R. C. ; SETH pauses C.*)

SETH. Why, how d' you do, 'squire? Glad to see you. And Mrs. Dill, too. My, but I am honored. (*To DAVID.*) Won't you sit down?

DAVID. No, thanks. Haven't time. Can say what I have to say standing, just as well. Only I wish to speak to you in private—(*glancing meaningly at MRS. D.*) if it is convenient?

MRS. D. (*not stirring*). I was here first. "First come, first served." That's another good proverb.

DAVID. But, madam, I have important business.

MRS. D. Well, good land, don't you s'pose I can have important business, too? I s'pose yours is politics. You've heard Seth Barrett is goin' t' run for District Attorney on the Democratic ticket, 'n' you've come t' see 'f you can't scare him out of it—or buy him off. Don't you let him do it, Seth.

DAVID. Madam —

SETH. Why, Mrs. Dill, I —

MRS. D. Don't "Madam" me, nor "Mrs. Dill" me, either. I may be a woman, but I know a thing 'r two, and one of 'em is, that some men think they can run the universe, but sooner 'r later they get their come-uppance. I come here t' see you on legal business, Mr. Barrett, 'n'—I want t' speak t' you in private—(*with a defiant look at DAVID*) "if it is convenient."

(*DAVID grunts, angrily, turning away in disgust. SETH bows politely.*)

SETH. Certainly, Mrs. Dill. I will ask the 'squire to wait. I shall be pleased to have you as a client.

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MRS. D. Well, I d' know's I'm a client, exactly, but I want —— (*Looks at DAVID again, meaningly.*) I'll tell you what, when we are alone.

DAVID. Of course, if I am intruding —— (*Goes to R.*) I'll call back in a few minutes, Mr. Barrett. Perhaps by that time you will be at liberty.

MRS. D. (*rising*). You needn't hurry yourself. What I've got t' say'll take more'n a few minutes.

(*DAVID smiles superciliously and exits R.*)

DAN. Gee! You talked right up t' him, didn't y'?

MRS. D. Of course I did. He scared his poor, meek little wife t' death, 'n' is makin' life miserable for that daughter of his—'n' tryin' t' run everybuddy he comes to—but he needn't think I'm afraid of him. Thank goodness, I ain't his wife. But if I was —— By the way, Seth (*looking at DAN*), I said "alone," y' know.

SETH. Certainly, Mrs. Dill. (*To DAN.*) Dan, you can go for a while. Be back in half an hour.

DAN (*getting hat and going R.*). All right, Mr. Barrett. (*Mischievously, as he glances at MRS. D.*) I'll go down to the store 'n' g't that new dime novel we was talkin' about—"The Murders in the Morgue; or, the Midnight Massacre ——"

(*Exit, R.*)

MRS. D. My, but that boy's a piece. Says you read them dime novels. I should think a lawyer ——

SETH. Ho! I just glanced at one, one day, and he caught me at it. Ever since then he accuses me of reading them. Won't you be seated again, Mrs. Dill, and tell me what I can do for you?

MRS. D. Thanks. (*Sits.*) I want a divorce. I've stood it jest's long as I'm a-goin' t'. He's the laziest, shifflesest thing 't ever lived, 'n' I'm tired of it.

SETH. What—again, Mrs. Dill? You know, this is about the seventh or eighth time we have talked this matter over. Don't you think ——

MRS. D. I don't think, I know—that I mean it this time. I know you've patched it up every time b'fore, 'n' made me overlook it 'n' forgive him, but this time he's gone too far. I ain't goin' t' put up with it no longer, and that's all they is about it.

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SETH (*seated R. C., she C. He regards her with patient good humor*). M'm—what has he done now?

MRS. D. It ain't s' much what he's done, it's what he don't do. I want that divorce, 'n' I mean t' have it. If you won't git it for me, I guess they's other lawyers——

SETH. But you will have to tell me the circumstances, Mrs. Dill, or how can I proceed? We have to have grounds, you know—and evidence. What has Sam done to make you think you are entitled to a divorce from him?

MRS. D. Entitled? I guess I'm entitled to it, fast enough. He jest sets around 'n' smokes his pipe, 'r whittles, 'n' won't hardly get a pail o' water 'r bring in an armful o' wood when I tell him to——

SETH. M'm—did you ever try asking, instead of telling, Mrs. Dill?

MRS. D. Huh! I guess you needn't think I'm goin' t' coax Sam Dill t' do anything. Don't I keep boarders, 'n' do sewin' when I have time, 'n' work my fingers to the bone, 'n' then—you expect me t' coax. I'd like t' see m'self! If I coax, it'll be with the broom-handle or the rollin' pin.

SETH. That's just it, Mrs. Dill. You pursue the wrong tactics. Many a man can be persuaded when he can't be driven.

MRS. D. Not Sam Dill. 'T any rate, I ain't the coaxin' kind. No, sir; I'm sick 'n' tired of it, 'n' I've stood it jest as long as I mean to. I want that divorce, 'n'——

SETH. On what grounds? Incompatibility of temper?

MRS. D. No, none of y'r high-soundin' terms—jest plain shiftlessness 'n' lack of gumption. How much'll it cost?

SETH. M'm—I can't say just now, Mrs. Dill. Will you require alimony?

MRS. D. Good land, can't you handle the case alone?

SETH. Why, yes, I—— Of course. I meant will you require Sam to pay you so much a week?

MRS. D. Oh! I thought you meant he was some other lawyer. As for that, I guess it's a lot I'd get out o' Sam Dill. No, all I want's t' get rid of him, 'n' thankful for that. (*Rises, goes toward R., looks off.*)

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Good land, here he comes now ! I wonder what he wants.

SETH (*rising, looking off*). Who,—Sam ? So it is. (*Motions L.*) Suppose you go in there, Mrs. Dill, while I talk to him a minute —

MRS. D. What ! Me hide from Sam Dill ? I guess I ain't afraid t' face him any time —

SETH. No, of course not ; but it might be better. You see, if he knew you were applying for a divorce — Why —

MRS. D. Well, of course I don't want him t' know jest yet. I want t' spring it on him as a su'prise. (*Goes L.*) But you needn't try t' patch it up, 'cause it can't be done this time.

SETH. Oh, no, certainly not ; I understand that perfectly.

MRS. D. No ; I've stood it jest as long 's I'm goin' t', 'n' —

(*Exit L., looking back, just as SAM DILL enters R.*)

SETH. Why, hello, Sam. How are you ?

SAM. Miserable, thank y', Mr. Barrett.

SETH. Oh, no ; not "Mister" Barrett. Just Seth, Sam.

SAM. Sure. Didn't know but you'd want the "Mister," now you're sett'n' up t' run f'r politics. 'G'inst Dave Conant, too. Some grit, I call it. Hope y' beat him, 'f he is a Republican. Al'ays be'n one m'self, but I'd like t' see Dave Conant licked all holler.

SETH. Well, that's what we're going to try to do, Sam. Pretty tough proposition though, I guess. But how's everything up to the house, Sam ?

SAM. My house—er—I mean, "her" house ? (*Sits, L. C.*)

SETH (*laughing*). Well, yes,—whose ever house it is. Any boarders now ?

SAM. Couple. Expect that feller from the city this week —young Spencer. Dude like, y' know, 't was here last summer. Shined up t' your Angie, y' know. That one.

SETH. Oh, yes ; nice sort of chap, I thought, though a little fast. How's your wife, Sam ? Well ?

SAM. Sure. Wouldn't nothin' dare make her sick, 'nless she said it could. Say, Seth, that's—wal, that's kind o' what I dropped in t' see y' about—her. We don't

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seem t' hitch it up very well t'gether. Can't do nothin' t' please, no matter how hard I try.

SETH. Do you try, Sam?

SAM. Try! Should say I do. Make a reg'lar hired girl out o' m'self—washin' dishes 'n' all—reg'lar woman's work—'n' don't git no thanks for it.

SETH. Well, you get a good home—your food, and so forth. Remember that, Sam.

SAM. Yes, but 'tain't that, though, Seth. I'm discouraged. 'Tain't no good way t' live. I married Jane f'r love, 'n' I'd love her 's much as I ever did, if she'd let me. Thought she loved me too, but—(*very much affected, wiping eyes*) somethin's killed it. Ain't got nothin' t' live for now. What I want, Seth, is t' have y' draw up my will, leavin' everything t' her. O' course I ain't got nothin', but what they is I want her t' have.

SETH. Why, Sam, aren't you well?

SAM. Yes, well enough, fur's that goes, 'xcept the lumbago 'n' a few little things like that. But m' heart's affected—breakin' life.

(*Wipes eyes. MRS. D. looks out L., surprised, much interested, but inclined to be disdainful.*)

SETH. Why, Sam, do you take it that hard? But don't worry; if anything happened to you, she'd get it all, seeing you have no heirs. But I hope it won't come to that, Sam.

SAM (*rising*). Well, you never c'n tell. Sometimes I feel like hangin' m'self to a rafter in the wood-shed. D' know but I will some day. Lost Jane's love, so they ain't nothin' t' live for.

(*Enter MRS. D., L., much perturbed; almost in tears.*)

SETH (*pretending not to see her*). M'm—don't you think you could tell her how you feel?

SAM. No—no, that wouldn't do. Told her enough times. Her love's dead, 'n' that's the end of it. (*Going.*) Don't be s'prised t' hear there's an end o' me, Seth, any time.

SETH. Now, Sam, I hope you won't go and do anything desperate.

SAM. That's the way I feel. Nothin' t' live for.

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(*He is about to exit R., when MRS. D. reveals herself, running over to him.*)

MRS. D. (*brokenly*). Oh,—Sam!

SAM (*looking at her, pretending to be very much surprised*). Jane! You here? Away! All is over between us. You have broke my heart.

MRS. D. (*pleadingly*). Oh, Sam, I didn't know you felt that way about it. (*Sobs.*) Oh, dear, I've misjudged you, 'n' never knew it. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

SAM. Yes, you've misjudged me. (*Shakes his head sadly.*) 'N' oh, how I loved y'!

MRS. D. "Did," Sam? Don't say it's all dead! Don't, Sam, 'r it'll kill me.

SAM. Then we'll die t'gether, Jane, like they do in books.

MRS. D. Oh, Sam! Sam, f'rgive me. I'll never speak a cross word to y' agin. I didn't know, Sam; I didn't realize how y' loved me. Oh, Sam! 'N' I love you too, Sam,—I love y'!

SAM (*relenting, but pretending to hesitate*). Be—be y' sure, Jane? Y' mean it this time?

MRS. D. Y-yes, Sam, I mean it.

SAM. Then I'll—I'll f'rgive y'—jest this once.

MRS. D. Oh, Sam!

(*He opens his arms, she sinks into them and buries her face on his shoulder. He looks at SETH, winking. SETH, who is L. C., smiles back. They are C., now start to go out R.*)

SETH. M'm—by the way, Mrs. Dill, what about that—er—that little matter of business you came to see me about?

MRS. D. (*pausing R.*). Business? What—— Oh, yes—you mean that back board bill. Wal, I guess I won't take it up jest now, thanks. Mebbe they'll pay. Come on, Sammy dear.

(*Holds out her hand to him affectionately; then glares at SETH, frowning and shaking her head.*)

SAM (*following her*). All right, lovey lamb. (*Exit MRS. D., R.; SAM lingers, speaking slyly to SETH, nodding head toward L.*) Knew she was in there the hull time—seen her go in.

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(Exit R., chuckling. SETH looks after them, laughing.
ANGIE runs in R., looking back.)

ANGIE. Guess they've made up again, haven't they?
Aren't they the limit?

(She has a letter which is opened.)

SETH. Well, that's the way it goes, Angie. That's what it means to get married. But I suppose it's worth while quarreling, just for the fun of making up.

ANGIE. I guess it would be better to be in a make-up mood all the time, without the quarreling. Oh, Seth, he's coming back! (Shows letter.)

SETH. Of course there's only one "he"—Alan Spencer. Yes, I had heard.

ANGIE. I suppose Mrs. Dill told you. He's going to board there again. Yes, I just got a letter from him. He's coming to-morrow. Oh, Seth, I'm so excited—so happy!

SETH. Be careful, little sister. Don't get carried away with that handsome chap, just because he has charming manners and says pretty things to you. Don't begin to take it too seriously. How do you know but what he has another girl in the city—perhaps several of them?

ANGIE. Oh, Seth, I'm sure he isn't that kind. He is such a gentleman, and writes such lovely letters.

SETH. Dear me, I'm afraid I haven't been doing my duty as a big brother. (They are C. ; he now puts his arm about her affectionately.) You know I want you to be happy, Angie dear; and that's just it. I am older than you and have seen more of the world. I have been to the big city, and had what they call "experiences"—a few of them—and I know what these city young men are and how they often look upon innocent little country girls like you as easy and lawful prey.

ANGIE. But, Seth—not Alan—I am sure —

SETH. No, my dear, you are not sure—yet. I want you to wait until you are, that's all. Alan Spencer may be one of the finest fellows in the world, and entirely worthy of you—I hope he is—but we must be a little wary, you know, until we find out. We must prove

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him, first, and then—why, then it will come out all right.

(He kisses her tenderly; she smiles up at him confidently and starts to go, just as DAN runs in R.)

DAN. Say, here comes Mr. Conant back.

(SETH goes R., meets DAVID, who enters R.; he nods carelessly to ANGIE, who replies as she goes out R., looking back at SETH with a smile. DAN is up by desk, SETH and DAVID down C.)

SETH. Good-morning again, 'squire. Won't you sit down?

DAVID. No, thanks. What's this I hear, Barrett, about your accepting the nomination for District Attorney on the Democratic ticket? Is it true?

SETH. Guess it is, 'squire.

DAVID. Didn't you know I was running for District Attorney?

SETH. Why, yes, of course. Some honor to have such an opponent, isn't it? I couldn't run against a better—a stronger man.

DAVID. I suppose I ought to say "Thank you" to that, even though you changed "better" to "stronger," but instead I'm going to tell you that you will have cause to be thankful to me if you take my advice and refuse the nomination.

SETH. You are very kind, but—really, I don't think I need advice on that subject. Thought it over pretty seriously and finally taken my own advice that it's the thing to do. I haven't had a hankering for politics, but this time—well, I feel the call.

DAVID. So! That's it, is it? A "call" to take up the fight against me, I suppose—considering me as one who ought to be put down? Very well. But let me tell you, young man, you are taking a pretty big proposition on your hands. I'm not an opponent you will find it easy to get the best of. I guess you know that.

SETH. I reckon I do, 'squire. That makes it all the more interesting, doesn't it? I shouldn't care to run against one who wasn't worth beating. If I beat you, it'll be all the more to my credit.

DAVID (*laughing sarcastically*). Ha! Maybe it will. But you aren't going to beat me. Why, do you suppose, after all my experience in politics and—well, the hold I have on affairs in this county—I'm going to let a little—a—well, a novice like you—step in and beat me? Not much. Ha! Well, I guess not!

SETH. Sure you're not, 'squire—if you can help it. A “little—m'm—well, 'novice,'”—like me, hasn't much chance, I'll admit. But I'm going to take that chance, and taking it I'm going to do my best to come out ahead. Surely you can't blame me for that. “All's fair in love and war”—or politics, which amounts to the same thing sometimes—you know. But I don't want any hard feelings. That isn't my nature. I want to go about this thing fair and square and amicably. Can't it be done?

DAVID. No, it can't. If you run against me, it's war, and nothing else. And I'll give you fair warning, it'll be war to the finish and you'll get the worst of it. What's more, you may consider that—well, there's something else I want to speak to you about. Of course, if you go in against me in this race, why, naturally, you can't expect me to permit you to—to have anything more to do with my daughter. This settles it between you and her. Some time ago you asked me to give my consent, but—I reckon you know what my answer is now.

SETH. But, 'squire, you wouldn't let politics influence you in a matter like that! Why, that wouldn't be fair. You know how it is between Helen and me—that she has accepted me, and—and that all we want now is your consent. I can support her—I—of course, I know I'm not half good enough for her—no man is—but—you wouldn't be so unjust as that, 'squire, would you?

DAVID. That's my decision, and I stick to it. (*Goes R.*) I guess there's no more to be said. You've made up your mind, so have I. Give up this fight or give up my daughter. You have your choice.

SETH. I—why, I can't give up the “fight,” as you call it, now, 'squire. It wouldn't be right. I have promised to enter the field and do my utmost to win. I must stick to it now, whatever comes. But—surely you see the injustice of letting a fair and square contest in

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politics, between two men who have always been of different parties, influence you in a personal matter like this—especially when Helen and I love each other and—I know you don't mean it. You can't.

DAVID. Don't talk to me about "injustice," young man. I know my business and run my own affairs. I've told you what's what, and that's all there is to it.

(He is about to go out, but SETH, now asserting himself with dignity, goes and steps in front of him, so he is compelled to stay.)

SETH. No, this isn't the end of it. Don't deceive yourself. I'm not as easy as you think, perhaps. There's fighting blood in me, not only when it comes to the war of politics, but in the matter of love. I don't intend to give up this fight, and I don't intend to give up your daughter, either.

DAVID. I'd have you understand my daughter will do as I say. My word is law in my house, and it's a law as inflexible as any you have in your books. When I command, she obeys. I don't think there's any more to be said. Good-day.

(SETH steps aside, downcast, but with a determined air, and DAVID exits R. SETH stands a moment looking after him, losing his confidence for an instant, then rousing himself, clenching his fist, with a close pressing of the lips. After a pause, HELEN CONANT and ANGIE put their heads in window, unnoticed by SETH.)

ANGIE *(looking R.)*. Is he gone?

SETH *(looking about, seeing them, delighted)*. Oh—hel-lo! My, but how the sun is shining all of a sudden! Come in, pretty sunbeams.

(Goes to window, greeting them, then to door, as they enter. They look back to be sure DAVID has disappeared.)

ANGIE. Sure he's gone? Helen was afraid to come in.

HELEN. No, I wasn't exactly afraid, but ——— Oh, Seth!

(She is close to him, C.; he takes her in his arms. ANGIE L. C.)

SETH. Yes, dear, I know. It will come out all right.

HELEN. Oh, Seth, do you think so?

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SETH. Don't you worry.

(About to kiss her, but she draws back, looking shyly at ANGIE.)

ANGIE. Don't mind me. *(Turns away.)* Love's blind, and so am I.

(SETH about to kiss HELEN.)

HELEN. But, Seth, dear—you mustn't. Father says — He—he says that if you run against him, I must never speak to you again. And, oh, Seth, you know father!

SETH. Yes, dear, I know. He has just been telling me all about it, and I told him—well, I told him a few things too.

HELEN *(hopefully)*. Did you tell him you wouldn't run?

SETH. No, dear, I couldn't tell him that. I shall run. I have given my word and I must stick to it. It's a good cause, and I mean to win if there's such a thing possible—yes, even against your father. He has no right to let this thing come between you and me, and if he takes that attitude, why, we'll have to make the best of it, that's all. I can't give in.

ANGIE. He's just bluffing, and I guess before I'd let that old — Oh, excuse me, Helen, I forgot he was your father. But I don't care if he is—he has no right to separate you from the man you love. Love is a very sacred thing, and—and —

HELEN. I know it is, and I wouldn't give up Seth for the whole world—no, I wouldn't, Seth!—*(he hugs her)* but—but I can't hold out against father. I just couldn't.

SETH. No, dear; but “Love will find the way,” you know.

ANGIE. Sure it will. “Where there's a will —” Maybe if you don't win, Seth, he'll —

SETH. Ho! What a little comforter you are! But I shall win—if I can—and if I do, what then? *(To HELEN.)* Lose you? Well, I guess not. Leave that to me.

HELEN. But, Seth, I—I'm afraid. I must obey father. If he tells me not to—not to see you—what shall I do? I can't live if I don't—oh, Seth, I just can't!—and if I do — Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

(Breaks down and weeps. SETH puts his arm about her, comforting her.)

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ANGIE. My goodness, this is no place for me. "Two's company, three's one too many." I'll be going. (R.) But don't give up. I wouldn't. If anything should come between me and—I mean between Alan and me—— Why, hello, Dan.

(Enter DAN, R.; sees HELEN in SETH's arms, puts hands over eyes.)

DAN. Whew! I didn't see nothin'. 'F I did, I wouldn't tell. Trust me.

(SETH and HELEN separate, she in confusion. ANGIE, R.; SETH, R. C.; HELEN, C.; DAN up by table, laying down several letters.)

SETH. Got the mail, Dan?

DAN. Yep. And you've got the female, looks like.

SETH. Don't get fresh, young man. (To HELEN and ANGIE.) He's spoiled, you see. Reads too many dime novels.

DAN. S'pose you'd rather read love stories?

SETH. That'll do for you. Skip!

HELEN. Oh, no; we're going now. At least, I must. I'm afraid I shan't see you again very soon, Seth, if you stick to your determination. If you would only give it up.

SETH. Would you want me to do that—to forsake principle—fall from my standard of right? No, I'm sure you wouldn't. You couldn't love a man who would do that.

HELEN. N-no, of—of course I—I suppose I couldn't. But—oh, I don't know—I feel as if there was nothing bright ahead—as if there is nothing to live for——

ANGIE. Oh, pshaw! There's heaps. "Never say die" is my motto. Well, if you're going, come on.

(ANGIE goes R., starts back, in alarm. SETH and HELEN are C., close together, DAN up by desk.)

DAN (also looking off R.). Whoop! Separate! Here comes——

ANGIE. Your father, Helen,—coming back. He must have seen you come in here. Run and hide.

HELEN. Where—where? (Starts L.) I'll go in here.

SETH. No—don't. Don't do that; stay here. Helen!

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(*She, too frightened to obey him, runs off L., just as DAVID hurries in R.*)

DAVID. Where's my daughter? (*Looks about.*) I saw her come in here. (*To SETH.*) Where have you hidden her? You'd better produce her. Where is she?

SETH (*motioning L.*). She is there, Mr. Conant. She ran in there in spite of my attempt to detain her. I will call her.

(*Goes L., disappears a moment, returns leading HELEN, who is trembling, standing L. with drooping head.*)

DAVID. So! A pretty situation, isn't it? Concealing my daughter and trying to keep her from me. That's the kind of man you are. (*To HELEN, sternly.*) Come here.

SETH. You misjudge me—you know it ——

DAVID. Don't waste words trying to explain. I can believe my own eyes. (*To HELEN.*) Go! Go home, at once. I will deal with you later.

ANGIE. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mr. David Conant. You're just as hard-hearted and unjust as you can be. If you were my father ——

SETH. Angie! Hush ——

DAVID (*glaring at her*). If I were your father you'd have some decency and manners instead of being an impudent little flirt, as you are. Maybe if Helen hadn't had so much to do with you ——

HELEN (*suddenly gaining courage, forgetting her fear of him and for a moment flaring up desperately*). Father! How can you speak so to Angie? She is not a flirt, and she is my friend! She's not what you say, and she never—never—influenced me or made me ——

DAVID. Silence! How dare you speak to me like that? Go, I say ——

HELEN. No, father, I can't—(*as he threatens her*) I won't, not till I have told you the truth. You have no right to misjudge her and—and Seth! I went in that room of my own accord—when he told me not to—because I was afraid of you—of my own father—but I don't care what you say, nor what you do to me, you shan't accuse him of such things. He is good and noble and true, and I—I—love him, and—and ——

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(She wavers, breaks down, sobbing hysterically. SETH goes to her, as if to comfort, but DAVID steps between them.)

DAVID. Stand back! So this is what my daughter has come to, through you and *(to ANGIE)* through you. It's worse than I thought; but I'm glad I have found it out in time. *(To SETH.)* Perhaps I shall have more to say to you on this subject another time. *(To HELEN.)* Come.

HELEN. But, father, I—I didn't mean—I—forgive me! I forgot—I—— Oh, don't blame him. It was all my fault. *(Turns to SETH, imploringly.)* Don't let him blame you. It was my fault. I——

DAVID *(his arm about her, leading her R., firmly but with a slight show of tenderness)*. That will do. *(She sobs.)* You'll find you can't defy me. *(To SETH, as he pauses R.)* And as for you—perhaps you'll realize the same thing—before I get through with you.

(He goes out R., sternly motioning HELEN to follow him; she does so, tearfully, looking back at SETH with a sad smile and a despairing shake of her head. SETH stands C., almost crushed; ANGIE goes up and looks off R., indignantly. DAN up by desk, silently expressing his hatred for DAVID. ANGIE comes back to SETH.)

ANGIE. Oh, Seth, I'm so sorry. Why—why don't you give it up—the nomination—those old politics——

SETH *(smiling down at her, tenderly stroking her head)*. Give up? No—no, little one; never! *(With fervor, clenching his fist and looking boldly toward R.)* No—no! That man is a demagogue—a tyrant! He's got to be beaten—crushed—and I—mean—to—do—it!

(He stands looking R., with a set, determined expression, not noticing ANGIE, who clings to him, looking up at him with a hopeful smile. DAN, at back, shows his approbation by giving a silent "Hurrah!" waving his right hand over head.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*Same as Act I, in the afternoon, about a week later. Discover DAN, actively engaged brushing up floor with broom. He sweeps toward door R., giving the broom a flourish almost in the face of DAVID, who enters hurriedly. DAN falls back with an apology; DAVID glares at him.*

DAVID. What you trying to do? Why don't you tend to your business and see what you're doing?

(Goes to desk, taking up telephone.)

DAN. Excuse me, Mr. Conant. Awful sorry; never saw y'. *(Takes broom L.)*

DAVID. Well, the next time pay more attention. I want to use your 'phone a minute. *(Calls up on 'phone.)* Give me 265 Main. *(Pause.)* Yes, yes—Main 265. *(To DAN.)* Say, boy, run down to the store, will you, and get me four five-cent cigars—Birch knows what kind I smoke. *(Takes quarter from pocket, giving it to DAN.)* Here's a quarter. You can keep the change.

DAN. Thanks. You watch the office?

DAVID. Sure. *(In 'phone.)* Hello! Is Miss Underwood there—Miss Isabel Underwood? *(Pause.)* Hello—yes. Oh, is that Miss Underwood? *(He pauses each time long enough for other person to speak.)* Yes, this is Mr. Conant. All right. I am in Mr. Barrett's office now. Yes. Well, suppose you come right down here. They'll tell you the way there at the hotel. It's only a step. All right. Thanks. Good-bye. *(Puts down 'phone, turns, sees JAMES FERGUSON looking in window.)* Oh, hello, Jim; come on in. You're just the man I wanted to see.

(DAVID rises, goes C.; enter JAMES, R.)

JAMES. What's the news?

DAVID. She's here!

JAMES. What! the woman?

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DAVID. Yes. Just arrived this morning. She's at the hotel now. That's her I was talking to over the 'phone. I sent the boy out after some cigars, so he wouldn't hear. He's a pretty bright kid and might catch on to something.

JAMES. Think she'll be equal to it?

DAVID. What! that woman? Sure. It's a cinch. I had a long talk with her when I was in New York last week and found her up to snuff. Those actresses will do anything for money, and she's dead set after our five hundred, all right. Tells a straight story, too. Oh, she's got the goods, and it won't take her long to put the quietus on Barrett and give him such a black eye that he'll be out of the running.

JAMES (*looking about, out of door, etc.*). Where is he now?

DAVID. Out electioneering, I guess. The boy says he drove over to Barleyville this morning and said he'd be back toward night. She's coming here to talk it over.

JAMES. Who—the woman?

DAVID. Sure—the woman. I told her to come right down. We'll fix it all up right here, if we can get rid of the boy.

JAMES. Kind o' resky business, ain't it—right in his own office?

DAVID (*laughing coarsely*). Well, maybe 'tis. Guess we'd better go down to my office, come to think of it; but I kind o' wanted to have her here and spring her on Barrett, if we could. But I guess there's time enough for that. We'll wait here till she comes, though. Be right here.

JAMES. She knew him, did she? Got a straight story?

DAVID. Straight? The truth. Of course, embellished up a bit. But she got acquainted with Barrett when he was in college. He was pretty gay with the rest of 'em, and they got pretty thick. Seems he made love to her—paid her lots of attention for a while, and—m'm—well, she got a hold on him somehow or other, threatened him with suit for breach of promise, or something like that—got some money out of him—and—well, it's all straight enough.

JAMES. Sure it wasn't anything like—blackmail?

DAVID. No, of course it wasn't. If I thought it was, do you suppose I'd have anything to do with it? I just got onto it by chance—a stroke of luck—and I tell you it was luck, too. It'll be the means of beating him, and that's what we've got to do. If Seth Barrett ever got elected District Attorney—well, good-bye to us. We can't afford to let that happen.

JAMES. No, I guess you can't, Conant. It'd put a crimp on your political career all right.

DAVID. Mine? And a few others, I calculate. Don't forget, Ferguson, it means your bread and butter, too.

JAMES. Bread and butter? Yes, and that's about all. But with you it means houses and lots, automobiles, trips to Europe, and such like.

DAVID. Oh, come now, don't begin that. You get your share for what you do. (*Sees off R.*) Here comes the kid. Not a word now before him.

JAMES. Sure. But what if the woman ——

DAVID. I'll fix that; don't you worry.

(*Enter DAN, R., with cigars, which he gives to DAVID.*)

DAN. Here they are, Mr. Conant.

DAVID. Thanks. (*Gives one of the cigars to JAMES, as he glances off R., motioning to JAMES, who follows his gaze.*) By the way, Dan, I forgot to tell you to get me some postage stamps, too. (*Takes quarter from pocket.*) Run down to the post-office and get me some, will you?—ten twos. Keep the nickel.

DAN (*taking money*). Well, y' know, I was supposed to look after the office, and ——

DAVID. Oh, that's all right. It won't take you but a minute, and we'll see to things. Skip along.

DAN. All right.

(*Exit DAN, R.; DAVID looks after him. He is R. C.; JAMES, L. C.*)

DAVID. Here she comes.

JAMES (*looking off R.*). Gee! she's a stunner, ain't she?

DAVID. Yes, and she knows her business, too.

(*Enter ISABEL UNDERWOOD, R.; she is somewhat flashily dressed, though still in good taste. Goes effusively to DAVID, offering her hand.*)

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ISABEL. Ah, Mr. Conant. How nice to see you again. I hope you are well?

DAVID. Yes, thank you, Miss Underwood. And you?

ISABEL. Very well, thank you, and I am sure this delightful country air will be most beneficial. It is so—so invigorating, you know, and ——

(Pauses, looking at JAMES.)

DAVID. Permit me to introduce Mr. Ferguson—Miss Isabel Underwood.

JAMES. Charmed to meet you, I am sure.

(She smiles, shaking hands rather ceremoniously with JAMES with an enquiring look at DAVID.)

DAVID. This is the gentleman I told you about—my right hand man. He understands everything and—well, you need have no hesitation about speaking before him. We three are the only ones so far.

ISABEL. I see. *(To JAMES.)* I am pleased to know you, Mr. Ferguson.

JAMES *(bowing with a crude attempt at courtliness)*. Same here, I'm sure, ma'am.

ISABEL *(smiling, as if amused)*. The amount, I believe, gentlemen, was to be five hundred dollars ——

DAVID. Yes, that's the sum we agreed upon.

ISABEL. Payable ——?

DAVID. Half now, or as soon as you have—er—convinced us that you have the goods, and—the remainder if he is defeated.

ISABEL. Very well. I shall earn the half at once—as soon as I have met the man. Where is he?

DAVID. Out of town just at present, but will be back shortly. In the meantime, perhaps we'd better go down to my office and talk matters over.

ISABEL. Oh, then this is not your office?

DAVID. N-no, it—it is his.

ISABEL *(laughing)*. Indeed! How original! Planning a man's ruin in his own bailiwick. Dear me, but that seems the irony of fate, doesn't it?

JAMES. Seems cheeky, t' my way of thinking.

DAVID. Oh, it's too bad about that. But I guess you two'd better go on down to my office, and I'll follow as soon as the kid comes back.

JAMES. All right.

(ISABEL walks to R., followed by JAMES. They pause, as MRS. D. suddenly rushes in R.)

MRS. D. Oh, excuse me—I didn't know —— (Stares at ISABEL in surprise, then turns to DAVID.) I come to see Seth Barrett. (Nods toward ISABEL.) Didn't know he had s' much grand comp'ny.

DAVID (motioning to JAMES to go on; JAMES and ISABEL go off R., she looking back curiously at MRS. D., then with a nod at DAVID, who returns it). He drove over to Barleyville. Be back some time this afternoon.

MRS. D. Where's Dan?

DAVID. He just ran down to the post-office for me. Be right back.

MRS. D. (going and taking chair L. C.). Who's all that, just in here—that woman?

DAVID. A stranger, I believe, who stopped to enquire her way, and Mr. Ferguson volunteered to show her.

MRS. D. Oh, he did? I guess "her way" don't need much showin', from the looks of her. If she ain't able to make her own way, I'll miss my guess. I never saw such a fussed-up thing. City boarder, I suppose? Stoppin' at the hotel?

DAVID. I believe so. I didn't enquire into her business. Leave that for you to do.

MRS. D. Oh, you will? Well, it seems t' me, Dave Conant, that was a pretty knowin' look she give you as she went out. I reckon she's the kind it don't take long t' get acquainted—with a man.

(Enter DAN, R., with stamps, which he gives to DAVID.)

DAVID. Much obliged. (Goes R.) Still interviewing lawyers, Mrs. Dill?

MRS. D. Still 'tendin' to my own business, Mr. Conant. S'pose you follow my example.

DAVID (laughing, as if she were not worth noticing). All right. Kind of afraid I won't succeed, though, if I go about it the way you do. Tell Barrett I was here, Dan, and want to see him to-night.

(Exit, R.)

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DAN. The old skunk ! I d' know what he wants t' hang around here for. (*Up by desk.*) Not after another divorce, are you, Mis' Dill ?

MRS. D. None of y'r impudence, young man. I was jest down to the store 'n' thought I'd stop in 'n' see how Seth's gettin' along with his politics. Hope he'll get elected, but I tell you it won't be no easy job t' beat Dave Conant—such a man as he is. He's be'n boss around here too long t' give up without a big fight. He'll do anything on earth t' keep his hold. Who's that woman 'twas here jest now ?

DAN. That one 't jest went down the street with Mr. Ferguson 'n' Mr. Conant ? Don't know. Looks some like a city boarder. Ain't she stopping at your house ?

MRS. D. No, she ain't. Never saw her b'fore. But y' needn't tell me Dave Conant didn't. That look she give him meant somethin'. Kind of a flighty sort o' creature, 's my opinion. (*Goes R.*) Wal, guess I'll be gettin' along. What time y' expect Seth back ?

DAN (*by window, looking out*). D' know. Pretty soon, I guess. (*Calls to some one outside.*) Hello ! Come on in.

MRS. D. (*looking*). Who is it ? Oh, Angie, with Mr. Spencer. She's jest crazy about him. I should think her brother——

(*Enter ANGIE and ALAN SPENCER, R., laughing, both in a very happy mood.*)

ANGIE. Good-afternoon, Mrs. Dill. Alan—Mr. Spencer—and I are talking about getting up a little picnic party, and we stopped in to see if Seth wouldn't go. Isn't he here, Dan ?

DAN. No. Ain't got back from Barleyville yet.

MRS. D. I guess Seth Barrett's got something else t' do besides goin' t' picnics. Didn't you know he's runnin' for District Attorney ?

ANGIE. Why, yes, but ——

ALAN. I hope he gets elected. Don't you, Mrs. Dill ?

MRS. D. Of course I do. Anything t' get the best o' Dave Conant. But I guess Seth'll find that ain't no picnic.

ALAN. I don't know—a young man as popular as Mr. Barrett seems to be —

MRS. D. Popular! Yes, but what's bein' popular compared to the hold Dave Conant's got, 'n' his kind o' followers? Him and that Jim Ferguson! What they ain't up to I guess never was thought of. (*Goes R.*) Wal, I'll be gitt'n' along, 'r you folks won't git no supper, Mr. Spencer, 'n' I guess that interests you more'n politics.

ALAN. Why, Mrs. Dill, do I act so ravenous? But then, you know, this country air—and all the good things you give us —

MRS. D. Land, I don't begrutch y'. Glad t' see y' eat. Compliment t' my cookin'. (*Looks off R.*) If here don't come my Sam! Land, he follers me around like a pet dog. Can't git out of his sight a minute.

ANGIE. You ought to appreciate such devotion, Mrs. Dill.

MRS. D. Devotion? Huh! I call it a nuisance. Always pokin' under foot.

(*Enter SAM, R.*)

SAM. Oh, here you be, Janey dear. Kind o' missed y' — (*Sees the others.*) How d' do?

(*They return his salutation.*)

MRS. D. Land, don't y' think I know the way home? You might better 'a' stayed there 'n' peeled them p'taters.

SAM. Got 'em all peeled. 'N' mopped up the kitchen, 'n' swatted some flies, 'n'—grated some horse-radish.

ANGIE. There, Mrs. Dill, I guess you can't say he hasn't been busy.

MRS. D. No, Sam, you've done pretty well, I guess, if you've done all that. You're quite a help lately, I must say. Come on, now, 'n' we'll be gitt'n' home. (*Going.*)

SAM. Guess I'll stay down street a while. Can't I, Jane?

MRS. D. Wal, don't you stay too long, then, 'cause I want you t' help git supper. Land knows, with city boarders, 'n' no hired girl — (*To DAN.*) When Seth comes, you tell him I want t' see him about somethin' —

SAM (*who is R., close to her—sentimentally*). N-not a divorce, Jane?

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MRS. D. No, of course not. The idee! You know better, Sam Dill. I've got somethin' else b'sides divorces t' think about jest at present. Mebbe I'll git back to the luxuries agin when my rush is over.

(*Exit, R.*)

SAM (*chuckling*). Jest jokin'. We've made it all up. Ain't had a spat f'r 'most a week—not a real, old-fashioned one. (*Goes R.*) Guess I'll be goin' on down street. Want t' see what's the news.

ALAN. Do you think Mr. Barrett is going to be elected, Mr. Dill?

ANGIE. Oh, do say "yes," Mr. Dill!

SAM. Might say it, but that wouldn't make it so. Hope he does. He'll have my vote, but—wal, when it comes t' beat'n' Dave Conant! But y' can't tell. The tide may turn. Like t' see him git the worst of it, b' gosh! But 't's kind o' dubious.

(*Exit, R., shaking head.*)

(DAN *is up by desk, or busy about stage.* ANGIE *sits L.,*
ALAN *is C.*)

ALAN. This Mr. Conant must be a powerfully influential man.

ANGIE. Yes, I suppose he is. At any rate, he seems to be a sort of—a sort of political czar, in this county. He's had his way so long, and nobody of any account has run against him, that—well, now that Seth's been put up as his opponent, and the Democrats have gone in to work for him as if determined he should win,—why, I guess Mr. Conant begins to have a little fear that his power is waning, and that Seth really may beat him. But I don't know. It seems almost too good to be true.

DAN. Don't you believe it. Mr. Barrett's goin' to win.

ALAN. That's the way to look at it. Just say he is. I believe in that.

ANGIE. Oh, yes, that's all right. I believe in being that way, too, but—well, you see, I don't believe Mr. Conant would stop at anything to beat Seth, and—he—has already told Helen that she mustn't speak to him any more or have anything to do with him. You know, she and Seth —

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ALAN. Yes. Last summer when I was here, I thought it was about settled.

ANGIE. So it was. But now — Oh, dear, it's terrible. And Helen's so afraid, and of course Seth doesn't like to set her against her own father, he isn't that kind of fellow, and — Oh, dear, I don't see how it's coming out! Of course, I want Seth to do what's right, and help his party, and all that, but—I do wish he'd give up those horrid politics. It seems to me getting the one you love is better than being elected to all the offices in the world.

(Almost in tears, but trying to be cheerful.)

ALAN *(standing by her, putting his hand on her shoulder)*. That's what I think, too, dear, but you know a man has to stick to principle and—don't you think she would have him anyway, in spite of her father?

ANGIE. She couldn't. You don't know that man. He's capable of locking her up—or putting her in a convent—or anything. He's a regular tyrant, and Helen—she hasn't a bit of courage. Now, if it was me—I mean “I”——

ALAN. What would you do, dear?

(He bends over her affectionately.)

ANGIE. Why, I—I——

DAN. Excuse me! If you want t' do any spooning, maybe I'd better vamoose.

ANGIE. Dan!

DAN. Aw,—well, you two make me sick! You can stay here 'n' mush; I'm going out 'n' buy “Ferocious Fred's Fatal Fight” with the ten cents Mr. Conant give me. *(Goes R.)* Be back in a minute. You two keep an eye on things 'n' do all the spoonin' you want t'. 'S nobuddy 'round.

(Exit, R.)

ANGIE *(blushing)*. Isn't he terrible?

ALAN. I don't know about that. I think he's a pretty sensible boy, and a very accommodating one.

(She sits on chair C.; he pushes her along a little and sits on edge of chair beside her. Puts arm around her.)

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ANGIE. Oh, Alan!

ALAN (*bending over, looking up into her face*). D-don't you think you could give me that—er—that kiss now?

ANGIE (*turning her head away, in confusion*). The idea! Of course not. It wouldn't be right.

ALAN. Why, I—I think it would be right, all right. If you won't give it to me, what if I should help myself?

ANGIE. Well, of course, I—a big strong man like you. I just suppose I couldn't help myself—— (*Makes a pretense at rising as he attempts to kiss her.*) You—mustn't!

ALAN. But I must! I simply can't help it.

(*She still continues a pretense of trying to escape, but in reality submits, and he kisses her, just as SETH enters R. He stands a moment watching them, at first surprised, then with a stern, disapproving look.*)

SETH (*coming down, speaking sternly*). Well! Is this what has been going on in my absence? Angie, come here!

(*ANGIE and ALAN spring up, he confused, but standing his ground; she in great perturbation, going and standing by SETH, almost in tears, looking pleadingly at him.*)

ALAN. Mr. Barrett—I hope——

SETH. I thought I could trust you, Mr. Spencer. I thought you were a gentleman—an honest one.

ALAN. I hope I am, Mr. Barrett. Perhaps I forgot myself for the moment, but—you know what my feelings are toward your sister, I think, and my intentions. If you will listen to me, I think I can justify myself——

SETH. I prefer to listen to nothing more on the subject at present. You will kindly leave us. We can talk this matter over another time.

ANGIE (*her hand on his arm, pleadingly*). Oh, Seth, don't—don't send him away!

SETH (*affectionately, but with firmness*). Hush, dear; I am not sending him away—I am asking him to go, and I am sure he will do as I request. This is no place for such a scene, Mr. Spencer, and no time. You should have known that.

ALAN (*about to go*). I am sorry, Mr. Barrett; I forgot

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myself. I will do as you request, but I shall yet be able to convince you of my worthiness, I hope, and of my honesty. Good-bye, Angie—Miss Barrett—and —— (*To SETH.*) May I come and see you, Mr. Barrett—soon?

SETH. Yes.

ALAN. Thank you. (*With a dignified bow, exits R.*)

ANGIE. Oh, Seth, how could you? You have offended him, and he may go away and I—never—see—him—again! (*Weeps.*)

SETH (*putting an arm about her, comfortingly*). There, there, little one! If his intentions are honorable and he really loves you, he won't go away; never fear. Don't you know I have to look out for the welfare of my little sister, to whom I have been both father and mother for six years? You hardly know this young man from the city—and his type. Mind you, I don't say there is anything wrong with him—to the contrary, I like him myself—but to make love to you, to kiss you, here, where anybody might see—and before he had asked my consent—no, that's too much. Oh, I know how you feel, and I'm sorry to hurt your feelings, but you are infatuated and —— But there, we won't say any more about it at present. (*Goes up to desk, looks over letters he finds there, etc.*) Where's Dan?

ANGIE. Why—Alan—Mr. Spencer—and I were here, so he said he guessed he'd run out and—and buy a di—something. He'll be right back.

SETH. I see. Bright lawyer that boy's going to make ——

(*Enter DAN, R.; when he sees SETH he hides paper novel under coat.*)

DAN. Oh, you back, Mr. Barrett? I just ran out ——

SETH. I know. (*Holds out hand.*) Let's see what this one's about.

DAN. W-what?

SETH. Come on, now; let me see it. Fork over.

DAN (*reluctantly handing him book*). Give it back?

SETH (*examining book*). “Ferocious Fred's ——” M'm—that looks like a pretty good one. Thanks.

(*Puts book in pocket.*)

DAN. Aw, say, now, give it back. Will y'? I want it.

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SETH. Just at present, young man, I think you'd better try to digest something with a little more substance. Here.

(Hands him heavy law book.)

DAN *(taking book)*. Aw, that dry old thing!

SETH. Not another word. Sit. Read.

(Motions to chair; DAN sits, scowling; opens book.)

DAN *(sulkily, reading)*. Read two pages yest'day.

SETH. Suppose you think you ought to be a full-fledged lawyer by this time, then. Well, a few more pages won't give you any too much knowledge.

ANGIE *(who has been standing L., looking on, somewhat amused and much interested, now coming to C.)*. I think I'll be going, Seth.

SETH. All right, dear. No hard feelings, I hope, toward your big brother?

ANGIE *(going to him)*. Why, Seth, of course not. How could there be? I know you mean it for my good—you know best—and—I—I'll do just as you say. *(He kisses her; she goes R., smiling, is about to exit, when she starts and comes back.)* Oh, Seth—here comes Helen!

SETH *(rising)*. Helen—here?

ANGIE. Yes.

SETH. She shouldn't. I'm afraid —

(ANGIE meets HELEN, who enters R., timidly, but with some determination; she greets ANGIE affectionately, then goes to SETH, C., and he welcomes her gladly, but with some trepidation.)

HELEN. Seth! I—I had to come.

SETH. But you shouldn't, dear. You know, if your father —

HELEN. But I don't care. I can't stand it any longer, and I won't. He has no right —

SETH. Yes, he has, dear, and you must respect it. We must be very careful, you know.

HELEN. But he is so hard—so cruel—and I — Oh, sometimes I think I almost hate him, if he is my father. He actually threatened to lock me in my room if—if I spoke to you again, and —

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SETH. And yet, here you are, speaking to me. Helen, you must go back home; at once, before he knows, if possible. That is the best way. Yes, dear, you must obey him—for my sake as well as for your own. Trust me. It will all come out right. But now—now you must be very careful, dear, and help me.

HELEN. Help you, Seth?

SETH. Yes. I need your help. I have a hard struggle before me—a struggle, I am sorry to say, against your father—but it's an honest fight. I have entered into it, and I must see it through.

HELEN. And I want you to win, Seth—if he is my father!

SETH. Thank you, dear; and now you must go home, as quickly as possible.

HELEN. All right, I will.

ANGIE (*who has stood back, now coming down*). He's been giving me advice—and instructions—too, Helen. We seem to be in the same boat. (*Smiles, rather sadly.*)

DAN (*pretending to be much disturbed, looking up*). Gee! How's a fellow goin' t' read law?

SETH. It's too bad about you. You can go in the other room, if necessary.

(*Exit DAN L., taking novel and leaving law book.*)

ANGIE (*going R.*). Come on, Helen; let's escape while we have a chance.

HELEN. All right. (*Going.*) Good-bye, Seth. I shan't give up hope.

SETH. Of course you won't—I should say not! While there's life, you know—and there's still plenty of it. Good-bye.

(*The girls affectionately bid him good-bye and go off to R. He stands by desk, takes up several letters, glances at them; one interests him very much and he becomes slightly agitated; is reading it when ANGIE enters R. He does not notice her until she speaks.*)

ANGIE. Seth. (*Comes to R. C.; SETH C.*)

SETH. Hello! you back?

ANGIE. Yes. Oh, Seth, you aren't really mad at Alan—Mr. Spencer—are you?

SETH. Mad? Why, no, of course not.

ANGIE. I mean—you aren't down on him? He just for-

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got, that's all, when he tried to—to—well, you know. He is a gentleman, Seth, I know he is, and I—I —

SETH (*putting an arm about her, consolingly*). Yes, dear, I know, and don't you let it worry your poor little head. It will come out all right. If he is worthy of you, he will prove it, and—well, if he's worth waiting for, you must prove you're worthy of him by waiting as I wish you to do. Run along now, that's a dear. I have lots to think about and lots to do.

(*Looks at letter, with a worried expression.*)

ANGIE. What is it, Seth? Something about those old politics? Let me see? (*Tries to look at letter.*)

SETH. No, no, it's nothing for you to know about. You wouldn't understand.

ANGIE. But it's in that letter, isn't it?

SETH. Yes. It's something I shouldn't like Mr. Conant to get hold of, that's all. Politics mean war, you know, and this is a sort of plan of the campaign. (*He is earnestly regarding letter.*) It gives us an advantage, and if he knew —

ANGIE. Well, I must go; Helen is waiting for me. Dear me, between you and Helen, and me and—and politics —

(*Shakes her head perplexedly and exits R. SETH sits by desk, looking at letters. After slight pause enter ISABEL, R. He does not at first notice her. She stands a moment regarding him with interest and some curiosity. Her manner is jaunty, self-possessed, at times almost impudent, though she starts this scene with an assumed air of meekness and innocence, a pose which she soon drops.*)

ISABEL. I beg pardon. This is Mr. Barrett, is it not?

(SETH turns, surprised, for a moment not recognizing ISABEL. She regards him smilingly.)

SETH. Yes. I am Mr. Barrett.

ISABEL. Can it be you don't remember me? (*Pretends disappointment.*) You don't!

SETH (*looking at her closely, with a puzzled expression*). Why—I—(*pause*) it seems to me I do. It's—it's Isabel Underwood.

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(*Enter DAN, L., unnoticed.*)

ISABEL. Ah, I am so relieved. You do remember. It would have been too bad had you not recognized so old a friend. Aren't you glad to see me?

(*Holds out her hand, which he pretends not to see.*)

SETH. How do you happen to be here? Why have you come?

ISABEL. How unkind,—to ask questions, instead of saying you are delighted to see me. But I will answer them. It's all by a lucky chance. You see, I am having a little vacation—thought I should like to go to some quiet place, where I could rest, and, as luck would have it, turned up here last night, and—almost the first name I heard mentioned, much to my surprise, was that of Seth Barrett. It seems you are getting to be quite a public man—a person of some importance.

SETH. Won't you be seated?

ISABEL. Thanks. (*Sits R. C.*)

(*DAN has been up L. C., looking on and listening with much interest.*)

SETH. You may go, Dan. I won't need you any more to-day.

DAN. All right. (*Gets hat, exits R.*)

SETH (*standing C.*). It does seem to be a peculiar coincidence, Miss Underwood——

ISABEL. Ah,—call me "Isabel"!

SETH. Your turning up here this way—Miss Underwood!—not knowing, as you say, that this is where you would find me. But, seeing you are here, you might as well tell me at once, without any more useless preliminaries, just what it is you want. (*She makes a gesture of remonstrance.*) Oh, I know there is something. This is not the first time, remember.

ISABEL. You do me an injustice. How can you wrong me so, such old friends as we are?

SETH. Yes, perhaps we were friends, once, if you want to call such an acquaintance as ours by that sacred name. I shouldn't. But, at any rate, we were pretty well acquainted. I was a green country boy, in college, having my first glimpse of the world—"real life," as

they call it—and, naturally enough, I suppose, easily became infatuated with the handsome actress—or “show girl,” rather—who lost no time in taking advantage of my infatuation, getting all she could out of me, and then throwing me over.

ISABEL (*rising*). Oh, you poor, innocent boy! Too bad, wasn't it? Nobody to protect you from the wiles of the woman to whom you made violent love, and who looked upon you as the silly little country gawk you were. Well, you got off mighty easy. She might have collected big damages for breach of promise, but she didn't.

(DAN *has appeared in window, looking in and listening; dodges back when there is danger of being detected; seems to be “catching on.”*)

SETH. I was very foolish, I admit, but I never did anything wrong—you know that. You made enough out of my little indiscretion, and I thought it was all in the past, but—ah, I see! My “past”—a rich morsel for my political opponents. Ah, ha! So! I might have known.

ISABEL. What are you driving at? What do you mean?

SETH. M'm—surely, you don't expect I am able to pay you half as much as they—he; however, if the letters are for sale, how much do you want for them?

ISABEL. What letters?

SETH. Why, those you have in your bag there, to be sure. You didn't come without your ammunition, and of course those foolish, calf-love letters I wrote you so long ago are what you depend upon to blow me up with—if I don't come to time. What's your price?

ISABEL. Sir, how dare you insult me? Do you mean to insinuate?

SETH. Not at all. It's not necessary. I come right out flat and say—you have those letters, you want to sell them, and I ask, “How much?”

ISABEL. Well, you're pretty cute. But I might have known—you're a lawyer now. My, but you've changed since I knew you before. Well, then, I have the letters, and I don't mind saying they're for sale. I'm hard up. I've had a bad season—have been losing my hold for some time—and now I've got to get

what I can out of life. I'm not owning that I have entered into any scheme, as you seem to infer, but I am saying that by handing these letters over to certain persons, who will see that the newspapers get them, your opponents can work up a scandal that will knock your chances of being elected as—whatever it is you're running for—sky-high, and also put an end for good and all to the love affair between you and that little country girl I seem to have heard something about. You might as well know the truth, and there it is.

SETH. Not quite all of it, though. Mr. David Conant is the other bidder, and he is bound to bid higher than I. Very foolish of you, my dear Miss Underwood, to give him away and yourself too. I don't think he will thank you. You have robbed him of his thunder.

ISABEL. So! that's how much you appreciate my coming to you, for old time's sake, and offering to help you.

SETH. Yes, that's just how much —

ISABEL. And you won't buy the letters?

SETH. No! I don't want the letters—and what's more, you have my permission to do as you please with them—to get all you can out of Mr. Conant—and I wish you success.

(He seems as if about to dismiss the subject, indicating that he wishes her to go; but she pretends not to understand. DAN keeps looking in window and dodging back, taking it all in, unnoticed.)

ISABEL. Oh, come now, you can't bluff me that way. It's all put on, and you know well enough you would do anything in the world to prevent these letters getting in the hands of the other side. Why, innocent as they may be, your opponents could make capital of them and ruin your chances. *(Takes small package of letters from hand-bag, shows them to him, tantalizingly.)* Look—here they are—six little letters, which I have half a mind to give to you anyway, you're such a good sport, and let the others go hang. *(Holds them out, then takes them back, though he makes no move to take them.)* But no, I'm too hard up. Got to have money. Much as I'd like to give them to you for nothing, I can't afford it. Look at them. Don't they look like innocent little things?

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SETH. And so they are. I don't deny that such men as—as you are dealing with—could make capital out of them, but only by lying and exaggerations. They can do as much without the letters, I dare say, with your help, so what's the use? I don't think there's any use discussing the matter further, Miss Underwood.

ISABEL. Oh, there isn't? Very well. But I can tell you now, Mr. Seth Barrett, when it's too late you will wish you had discussed it further.

(She is well up stage, near desk, in her excitement apparently somewhat losing her self-possession; nervously starts to pull on glove, or arrange hat or dress, and absent-mindedly lays the packet of letters on desk, near those SETH previously had gathered up and left there. DAN is looking in window, watching her every movement. As ISABEL again goes a few steps down C., SETH being farther down L. C., where she keeps her eye on him, DAN reaches in and, watching closely, quickly seizes her letters. They are tied with a broad rubber band. DAN expeditiously loosens band, takes the other letters—as left by SETH—puts rubber band around them and leaves that packet instead of the other, which he keeps, and then disappears from sight, after a mischievous glance and triumphant shake of his head at ISABEL.)

SETH. I think not. *(Looks off R.)* You will find Mr. Conant's office down the street there—see, on that side *(pointing)*, three doors beyond the post-office. No doubt he is waiting for you anxiously. More anxious to see you than I am to detain you, I dare say.

ISABEL. How ungallant! You never used to treat me in this way. But that was long ago, and—very well. So be it. I'm sorry—really I am—but if it is to be war between us, why—it's your own fault.

(Goes up, as if about to exit.)

SETH *(pointing to desk)*. The letters! Don't forget the precious letters. *(Very coolly.)*

ISABEL *(starting, turning to desk, seizing letters)*. Oh! I declare—how careless of me! I—I quite forgot. Thank you. *(She looks at him curiously, as if unable*

to understand such treatment.) Why did you do that?

SETH. Do what?

ISABEL (*lingering; back to c.*). Tell me about those letters?

SETH (R. C.). They are yours—not mine.

ISABEL. But you might have—(*holding up letters*) and instead —— Well, it's beyond me. (*Opens hand-bag and slips letters into it.*) Really, you're the kind of fellow that deserves to win, but—(R.) you've had your choice, and now ——

(*Smiles patronizingly, shakes head, as if thinking, "I give it up!" and exits R. SETH stands a moment looking after her, with an expression that shows his disgust, also his determination, then, with a toss of his head, indicating that he is prepared to fight, turns to desk, as if to take up the letters he had left there. Not seeing them, he looks about, puzzled; is busily, and with increasing excitement, searching, on desk, under papers, in drawers, etc., as curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*Nicely furnished dining-room and living-room combined, in home of SETH; chairs, pictures, curtains, etc., as seen in unpretentious but comfortable and attractive country house. Entrances R. and L. Discover SETH, who has just risen from supper table, about to put on hat and go out; ANGIE seated R., with fancy work; LOBELIA clearing last of supper things from table, L. C., removing white cloth, putting on dark spread, etc.*

LOBELIA. Miss Angie, he didn' eat hahdly nuffin dis time, eithuh. Seems lak yo' ain' got no ap'tite 't all, lately, Mass' Seff. Yo's gwine be sick, yo' don' look out.

SETH. Don't you worry, Lobelia; I'm all right. It's just this little excitement over the election, and so on. I'm not sick.

LOBELIA. Wal, Ah d' know ——

ANGIE. I think Lobelia's right, Seth. You're all worked up, and election isn't for some time yet. I just don't think it's worth it—and Helen and all.

(Exit LOBELIA, L., with things.)

SETH. Now, don't you begin too, little woman. I'm in for it, and I've got to see it through. You wouldn't want your big brother to show the white feather and back out now, would you?

ANGIE. N-no, of course I wouldn't; but a man like that old Dave Conant—— *(Rises; SETH looks at her reprovingly.)* Well, I don't care—I just despise him. Look at the way he's treating Helen. Why, as if she were a baby, or—or he Bluebeard and she one of his wives——

(Enter LOBELIA, L., working about.)

SETH. I guess it isn't so bad as all that. Have you seen her lately?

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ANGIE (*going to sofa down R.*). Of course not. How could I, when he keeps her shut up? I think it's your duty to go and rescue her. If I were in her place, I'd get out somehow and run away.

SETH. And make matters all the worse. No, she is doing the very best thing. It will all come right in time. After election—however it may go—will be time to do something. In the meantime——

ANGIE. Yes, and in the meantime, for weeks maybe, she's got to stay shut up like—like the princess in the tower, and mope and mope. Ugh,—such a father!

LOBELIA. Ah'd lak t' skin 'um alibe, de ole rapsallion!

SETH. Ha! I guess his skin's too tough for that, Lobelia. (*Goes R., with hat.*) I'm going down street a while, Angie—to the office. I have lost an important letter, and must see if I can't find it.

ANGIE. A letter? What was it?

SETH. Oh, you wouldn't understand. From a politician—something about Conant that we don't want him to know we know. It'll turn up, I guess. Don't you bother. (*About to go.*) Just you see that you control that little tongue of yours, and not get too excited. You too, Lobelia.

(*Exit, R.*)

LOBELIA. Ah reck'n mah li'll tongue's gwine say few t'ings—see 'f it don'.

(*Takes broom and begins brushing up.*)

ANGIE. And mine, too. I'd—bust!—if I didn't talk. I fairly boil when I think of Dave Conant. I suppose it's wicked, but I just hate that man.

LOBELIA. Den Ah's jest's wicked 's yo' is, honey, ca'se Ah 'clar t' goodness Ah hates 'im too. Wha's he wan' treat Mass' Seff so, fo'? Why don' he gwan 'long 'bout his bus'ness 'n' let Mass' Seff win?

ANGIE. Why, because, Lobelia, that wouldn't be politics. There always has to be two sides, and of course Seth expects to have somebody run against him—but it's having a man like Mr. Conant to run against. Of course, it would be all the more satisfaction to beat him, but—I'm so afraid he can't.

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LOBELIA. Is yo', honey? Lan', Ah could beat him, yo' jes' bet, 'f Ah got aftah 'im once. Hit him ovah de haid s' hahd he'd jes' beg fo' mussy.

ANGIE (*laughing*). But that isn't the way, Lobelia. You have to do it with the ballot.

LOBELIA. Laws a mussy, Ah ain' got no ball't, but Ah got a raight strong arm yuh, an' a mahty good broom-stick.

ANGIE. Ha! ha! I guess the men wouldn't stand much chance if the women could use broomsticks instead of ballots. (*Throws head back, laughing merrily.*) Oh—oh—Lobelia!

LOBELIA. Ah jes' bet Ah'd beat 'um.

X (*Knocking heard off L.*)

ANGIE. I wonder who that can be, the back way. Go and see, Lobelia.

(*Exit LOBELIA, L. ; ANGIE is seated, with fancy work, not looking up. LOBELIA soon returns, L.*)

LOBELIA. 'T's Miss Helyun.

ANGIE (*springing up*). What! Helen Conant—here? (*Enter HELEN, L. She is pale and appears nervous and frightened, but has an air of determination.*

ANGIE, C. ; HELEN, L. C. ; LOBELIA *up* L. ANGIE greets her affectionately.) Why, Helen dear, what's the matter? What has happened?

HELEN. I—have—run away.

(*Exit LOBELIA, L.*)

ANGIE. I don't understand. You mean you have left home?

HELEN. Yes, and I am never going back. I'm not going to submit to such tyranny, even from my own father. He has no right to treat me so and make me a prisoner—I, a girl almost twenty. It's outrageous, and I won't stand it—I won't!

ANGIE. I know, dear, but Seth says it is for the best.

HELEN. Oh, it's easy enough for him to talk, but if—he really loved me —

(*She is seated on sofa down R. ; ANGIE standing by her.*)

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ANGIE. Oh, Helen, he does! It's because he does, and because he wants to protect you and not do anything that you and he will be sorry for,—and the election, you know ———

HELEN. Oh, yes, I know; he thinks more of that office he's running for than he does of me ———

ANGIE. Why, Helen Conant, how can you say such a thing? You know Seth isn't that kind of man, and I guess if that's the opinion you have of him—well ———

HELEN. It isn't, Angie, you know it isn't. I believe in Seth, and I want to do what's right, but I'm so—so miserable, and—and it's so terrible to stay shut up in the house, that I couldn't stand it any longer. Why, I'm actually afraid of father—he is so severe, so cruel, there is no saying what he might do. He would send me away, where I could never see Seth again, and—that would kill me. (*She has risen.*) No, I'm not a child to be treated like this—nor a slave, to be driven—and I won't submit to it, I don't care what happens!

(*Enter LOBELIA, L.*)

LOBELIA. Wha's de mattah? Why, Miss Helyun, wha' ails yo'? Yo' sick?

ANGIE. She's just excited, that's all, and all upset. She'll get over it in a few minutes. Come, Helen, we'll go up to my room; you can lie down and rest a little while, and then we'll talk it over and see what can be done.

HELEN. But I'm not going back home—I'm not ———

ANGIE. Well, you needn't, then. Just come now and get quieted down.

HELEN (*as she submits, going L. with ANGIE*). Where's Seth?

ANGIE. He went down street for a little while. Come, dear. (*To LOBELIA, as they go out.*) Lobelia, don't tell any one she is here. If anybody comes enquiring for her, don't let them know.

LOBELIA. All raight, missy, Ah won't. Dey couldn' git it out o' me wid a dozen wil' hosses. No, sah. (*Exeunt ANGIE and HELEN, L. Door-bell rings. LOBELIA goes R.*) Lan' o' mussy, wondah who dat is.

(*Exit R.; admits DAVID, who blusters in, in a great rage, LOBELIA following.*)

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DAVID. Where's my daughter? Don't say she isn't here; I know she is.

LOBELIA. Den Ah guess dey ain' no use sayin' nuffin, 'f yo'-all 's so suah. Reckon yo's mistaken, dough.

DAVID. No, I'm not mistaken, either. She's here, and I know she is, and the sooner you tell her to come out and show herself, the better.

LOBELIA. Lan' sakes, wha' yo' talkin' 'bout, Mass' Conant? Who yo' look'n' fo'—Miss Helyun? Ah reckon she's home.

DAVID. I reckon she isn't, so you needn't lie to me. She's here, that's where she is, and I'll make it hot for Seth Barrett, encouraging her to go against her father. He'll pay for it, and so shall she. It's the last time she'll get a chance to defy me like this. Well, why don't you go and tell her I'm here, instead of standing there like a bump-on-a-log?

LOBELIA. Who yo' reckon yo's talkin' to,—me? Well, if yo' is, yo' ma'h't as well hush up yo' noise, 'case yo' cayn't scah me nohow. (*He starts to go L., but she bars his way.*) Whar yo' gwine? Gwan 'way from yuh, yo' fool man! I'se gwine lose mah tempah 'n a minute.

DAVID. My daughter's in there. Stand aside.

LOBELIA. Stan' 'side yo'se'f. Whoevah heerd sech foolishness? Whose house yo'-all t'ink dis is—yo's?

DAVID (*desisting, but still determined; sitting c., resolutely*). Well, I'll wait right here, then, till I find out. We'll see whether she's going to obey me or not.

(*Door-bell rings.*)

LOBELIA. My lan's o' lub, dar's dat ar bell agin. (*Starts R.*)

DAVID (*springing up*). Oh, so it rang before, did it?—when my daughter came? I thought so.

LOBELIA. G' 'long! Wha's do'-bells fo', 'f 'tain't t' ring?

(*Goes and admits MRS. D., R., followed by SAM.*)

MRS. D. (*seeing DAVID*). For the land's sake, you here, Dave Conant? I guess they must be five or six of y', the way you keep yourself distributed. 'S if one wa'n't enough! (*To LOBELIA.*) Seth t' home?

LOBELIA. No, he ain' t' home. Up street.

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MRS. D. Oh, he is? Wal, I want t' see him. When'll he be back? (*Sits on sofa, R.*)

LOBELIA. D'know. Purt soon, mebbe.

MRS. D. I'll wait. Went to his office this afternoon, 'n' he wa'n't there. (*Sits R. C.*) I've got all night.

(*She disdains SAM, who tries to make up to her, with an air of pitiful pleading. He brings chair from up R. and sits close to her; she hitches away, giving him a withering look.*)

DAVID (L.). What's the matter, Mrs. Dill? You and Sam had another spat?

MRS. D. Whose business is it, if we have?

SAM. Now, Jane! Jane—speak to me, won't y'?

MRS. D. (*giving him another contemptuous look, then turning her back on him*). I guess I ain't goin' t' stand everything. 'T's gone about fur enough.

LOBELIA. Laws o' mussy, Mis' Dill, yo' in anothah pickle?

DAVID. A dill pickle! That's good. (*Laughs.*)

MRS. D. Smart, ain't y'? I guess it's worse 'n a dill pickle you're comin' to, Dave Conant—'lection. Say, what's this I hear about that woman from New York, tryin' t' hatch up somethin' t' hurt Seth Barrett? Your doin's, I'll bet a cookie. Jest like your way o' doin' things. Must be you're pretty well scart 'n' afraid o' gitt'n' beat, t' resort t' such methods. Pretty small, I call it. But, then, I ain't s'prised.

DAVID. Where'd you hear that yarn?

MRS. D. Yarn, is it? Well, I heard it all right. It comes straight enough. I knew the minute I laid eyes on her, the other day, 't she wa'n't here for no good purpose. Tryin' t' get up some story t' go ag'inst Seth Barrett, jes' so he won't get 'lected. Bet you're at the bottom of it. A man that'll lock his own daughter up, 's if she was some criminal, jest b'cause —

DAVID. Say, let up, will you? Your tongue runs like a threshing machine. Is there ever anything you don't find out? I don't wonder your husband can't live with you —

SAM (*firing up, indignantly to DAVID*). See here, Dave Conant, don't you talk that way t' my wife! I won't stand for it, so y'd better shut up. She's worth a dozen

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like you, any day, 'n' when you 'nsult her you 'nsult me. Understand?

(MRS. D. *looks at him in surprise, her anger beginning to change to admiration.*)

DAVID. Ho! you're a pretty one to talk,—a man that's henpecked as you are. Why, you don't dare say your soul's your own —

MRS. D. (*flaring up to him*). Oh, he don't, eh? I'd have you know he's my husband, Dave Conant, and more of a man than you ever was 'r ever will be. I'd ruther he'd be poor as a church mouse th'n t' be as rich as a dozen millionaires 'n' git the money the way you git yours.

LOBELIA. Laws o' mussy, Mis' Dill, don' yo' git so 'xcited. Fust y' know he'll have yo' put 'n de lock-up.

MRS. D. Let him try it. Not while I've got my husband here t' pectect me. Will he, Sam?

SAM (*delighted, standing up by her*). No, Jane dear, you can bet he won't. (*Glares at DAVID.*)

DAVID (*laughing sarcastically*). You're a fine lot, you are. I can't waste any more time over you. (*To LOBELIA.*) I'm going, but I'll be back; and I'll find my daughter, if I have to get out a search warrant to do it. You needn't think you can fool me. She's here, and I know it, for she was seen coming in this direction, not ten minutes before I got here. I'll have the law on you, that's what I'll do, and your precious master, too.

LOBELIA. Laws o' mussy! Mass' Conant, he don' know nuffin 'bout it, 'deed he don't. He wa'n't yuh, nohow —

DAVID. Ha! Wasn't here—when?

LOBELIA (*confused, seeing her mistake*). Why—when yo' come, Mass' Conant. Dat's all Ah means, deedy dat's all.

DAVID. All right. We'll let it go at that—for the present—but you'll find this isn't the last of it. Seth Barrett will hear from me about this.

(*Exit, R.*)

MRS. D. For the land's sake, has Helen Conant run away from home? Is she here?

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LOBELIA. Dat's what he t'inks, the crazy jigger. Ain' got no sense, nohow. Nevah did see sich go'n's on. (*Goes L.*) Ah's gwine up 'n' tell Miss Angie yo's yuh.

(*Exit, L.*)

(MRS. D. *sits, not noticing SAM, who makes up to her, imploringly.*)

SAM. Jane! Jane, you goin' t' make up agin? (*Pause.*) Be y', Jane? Don't y' know I love y', Jane,—don't y' know I do? Come on, Jane, will y', 'n' make it up?

MRS. D. I d' know whether I will 'r not. What good does it do? You go 'n' git me all pervoked agin, so 't I jest git desperate. I guess a divorce is the best thing.

SAM. Oh,—J-Jane! (*Almost in tears.*)

MRS. D. Yes, I guess it is —

SAM. Oh, Jane, you don't mean it! Didn't I stick up for y'? I'd fight for y', Jane,—I'd die for y'!

MRS. D. Land, what 'd be the use? You ain't got no life insurance.

SAM. But I'll git it insured.

MRS. D. 'N' then die for me? I guess you might better live for me—'n' prove y' mean it by havin' some gump-tion 'n' not bein' so shif'less.

SAM. I will, Jane,—I will. I'll wipe the dishes, 'n' sweep, 'n' chop wood, 'n' —

MRS. D. (*softening*). M'm—w-well, then, I—I guess I'll forgive y' once more—jest this once —

(*He, delighted, is about to kiss her, when LOBELIA enters L.*)

LOBELIA. Laws o' mussy, what yo'-all do'n'? Ah clar t' goodness, fight'n' one minute 'n' honey-sweet'n' de nex'.

MRS. D. Wal, I guess a man's got a right t' kiss his own wife, 'f he wants t'.

SAM. 'N' I guess he wants t', too, when he's got the kind o' wife I have.

(*Smiles sentimentally at MRS. D. She looks at him with tenderness.*)

(*Enter ANGIE, L.*)

ANGIE. Good-evening. Excuse me for not coming down before, but I didn't know you were here.

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MRS. D. Oh, that's all right. We ain't be'n lonesome. How's Helen Conant?

ANGIE. Why, she—she was pretty well, the last time I saw her.

MRS. D. Oh, she was? Glad t' hear it. I ain't askin' when that was. 'Tain't none of my business, I s'pose. I don't blame her if she has left, 'n' never goes back—with Dave Conant for a father. (ANGIE *looks dismayed*.) Oh, you needn't be scart. I ain't goin' t' tell all I knows, 'n' neither's Sam, so don't you let that worry y'. (Goes R.) Come on, Sam, I guess we'll be goin'. (To LOBELIA.) You can tell Seth I was here, if y' want t', but that what I come t' see him about can wait. Come on, Sam.

(Exit, R. SAM follows, pauses at door, looking back, grinning.)

SAM. Guess I know how t' git around her, don't I? See how easy I done it?

(Exit, R., chuckling.)

LOBELIA. Laws o' mussy, dey takes de cake!

(She and ANGIE both laugh.)

(Enter MRS. D., R., hurriedly.)

MRS. D. That woman's out here,—comin' in.

ANGIE. Who,—what woman?

MRS. D. That actress woman—the one from New York —

ANGIE. Here? What does she want?

LOBELIA. Ain' gwine let 'er in. Don' wan' no sech trash comin' yuh. (Goes R.)

ANGIE. No, no; I can't see her. Tell her —

(Enter ISABEL, R. MRS. D. looks at her critically; ANGIE with surprise; LOBELIA defiantly, as if inclined to put her out.)

ISABEL. I hope you will pardon me for entering so uncere-
moniously. I was about to ring, when this lady (*indi-
cating* MRS. D.) opened the door and saved me the
necessity of troubling you. May I enquire if Mr. Bar-
rett is at home?

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ANGIE. No, he is not. If—if you have business with him, I think it will be necessary for you to call at his office.

MRS. D. I should say as much. Looks kind o' queer, it seems to me, your comin' here this way. But I don't s'pose you care if it does make talk. Mebbe that's what you're up to.

ANGIE. Mrs. Dill!

(Exit LOBELIA, L., with suspicious glances at ISABEL.)

MRS. D. Oh, I s'pose it ain't none o' my business, but appearances speak for themselves. I'll be goin'. *(R., to ISABEL, as she goes out.)* But I want y' to understand you couldn't make me believe anything against Seth Barrett—not if y' swore to it on a stack of Bibles 's—'s high as the church steeple.

(Exit, R., with a determined air, her head up.)

ISABEL. Your brother seems to have some very earnest champions, Miss Barrett. I should judge he is about the most popular man in this vicinity.

ANGIE. I suppose he is, but—I don't see what good it does him. Running for office against a man like Mr. Conant is only a means of getting into hot water. That man — Excuse me, I know I shouldn't say anything. Did you say you wish to see my brother—on business?

ISABEL. Y-yes; but that can wait. Tell me about this man—this David Conant—is he so—so terrible? Hasn't he a right to win, if it's in his power?

(She has taken the chair ANGIE has offered her, and is seated R.; ANGIE stands L. C.)

ANGIE. Why, of course he has; but he ought to play fair. He'd resort to any means. Hasn't he—but I forgot, I wasn't to talk. Seth told me girls have no right to talk politics, and that I shouldn't express opinions. He never says a word against Mr. Conant himself—he isn't that kind.

ISABEL. Your brother isn't?

ANGIE. Of course he isn't. He's too honorable. Why, I don't believe Seth could do a mean or a dishonorable act. He'd rather get beaten, ten times over, than do anything underhanded to win. And just see what it means to him—this running for office—with Mr. Co-

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nant forbidding Helen even to speak to him, when they were the same as engaged. Oh, it's just terrible, and I—I wish he'd give it up. Helen's worth a hundred offices, and—and she's just breaking her heart, too, and —— Oh, dear! (*Cries.*)

ISABEL. So Mr. Conant's daughter is your brother's sweetheart—and her father forbids—— Ah, I see. That complicates matters, doesn't it? (*Rises.*) And your brother keeps up the fight, even against such odds, and with so much at stake—simply because he thinks it his duty? I didn't understand all that. He must be brave, as well as upright and honest, as you say.

ANGIE. Brave? I guess he is. Oh, if you knew him, you'd love him—no—I didn't mean just that!—I meant you'd see—well, of course he's my brother, and —— Why, Helen! (*Enter HELEN, L.; she is very pale and falters as she sees ISABEL. ANGIE goes to her, assisting her to chair, L. C. ISABEL looks at her rather curiously, but not unkindly.*) This is Miss Conant—Helen Conant—Miss ——?

ISABEL. Underwood. (*To HELEN, with courtesy.*) I am pleased to meet you, Miss Conant. I believe I have met your father.

HELEN (*rising as she is introduced*). Perhaps. I—I think I have heard of you——

ISABEL. Through him?

HELEN. My father? Oh, no, Miss Underwood; not through him. I—I think it was Mr. Spencer.

ISABEL. Spencer? I don't think ——

ANGIE (*not pleased at the suggestion*). Mr. Spencer? Do you know Alan Spencer, Miss Underwood? I didn't think he knew any such—any—actresses!

ISABEL (*laughing, somewhat constrainedly*). Oh,—“actresses”! I suppose you think they are terrible creatures. M'm—well, perhaps they are, some of them. But don't you think it is possible there are exceptions?

ANGIE. I—why, I suppose there are—of course. I—I didn't mean anything, really I didn't. You see, I don't believe we are quite accountable for what we say or do, these days—some of us—we are so all worked up, and everything. At least I'm not, and as for Helen here,—poor girl, I guess she's been through enough, and—goodness knows, it isn't all over yet.

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ISABEL. I am sorry if you are in distress, Miss Conant. I—pardon me, but I—is it because of your father—and Mr. Barrett?

HELEN. Y-yes. Father says—he says I must never ——
(*Pauses, as if afraid of saying too much.*)

ANGIE (*going and standing by her*). Yes, her father is angry at my brother, because he's running for the office he wants, and he's mean enough—well, don't you think it's mean?—to try and separate him and Helen, just for revenge. Why, he even locked Helen up—made a prisoner of her—but she got out and ran away and came here. If her father finds her, I don't know what'll happen ——

ISABEL (*to HELEN*). Why, my child, you shouldn't have done that. You are only making matters worse. Don't you know it? You should go back home at once, before your father finds out you are here ——

ANGIE. That's just what I told her ——

HELEN (*rising—with some spirit*). Oh, it's easy enough for you to talk, but if you had it to bear, I guess you would rebel, too. He has no right to treat me so—as if I were a mere child and had no right to choose for myself. But I don't care—I shall not give Seth up—I will see him; and I won't go home—no, I won't—and be treated like a—like a—slave! I'd rather die!

ANGIE. Why, Helen dear, you mustn't get so excited. You'll be sick.

ISABEL (*to ANGIE*). Will you let me speak to her—alone?

ANGIE. I ——

ISABEL. Oh, you may trust her with me,—even if I am an—“actress.”

ANGIE. Oh,—why, of course —— (*Goes L.*)

ISABEL. Just for a moment. You may come right back.

ANGIE. All right.

(*Exit, L.*)

ISABEL (*after regarding HELEN for a moment, silently, her face somewhat softened*). So your father has separated you from your—from the man you love, Miss Conant—and that man is Seth Barrett.

HELEN (*surprised, with a trace of indignation*). “Seth?”
Do you know him—as well as that?

ISABEL. Pardon me. It was a slip; because I hear every-

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body else around here call him that, I suppose. May I ask—I suppose it is an impertinent question, but I should like to know—if you are—or were—engaged to him?

HELEN. Yes. I—had a ring (*holding up hand*), but—my father took it from my finger; he said he would give it back to Seth, and that—that I must never see or speak to him again.

ISABEL. And yet you disobeyed him, and came here?

HELEN. Yes. I had to. I love Seth too much to give him up—even for my father, when he is so cruel, so unjust. He has no right —

ISABEL. And does Seth—pardon me, Mr. Barrett—encourage you in going against your father?

HELEN. Oh, no; he told me to obey him, to wait. He thinks after election—after —

ISABEL. Ah, I see. He is thinking of his own interests, of the effect it might have if your father circulated the report that he had stolen his daughter —

HELEN. Don't you say that, if you mean to imply that Seth isn't all that is good and honorable. He wouldn't do anything wrong—he couldn't.

ISABEL. But, my dear, do you believe that any man—any mere man—could be perfect? Do you think there is one living—even your wonderful Mr. Seth—who has no faults, who never has done anything that he would prefer the world—or some one little woman—should never know?

HELEN. I know Seth Barrett never could do anything that would make me stop loving him. I know that. I don't care what he did—what he had done—even if it was not just—just right—I—I should still love him.

ISABEL. But—if you found out that you were not the first—that there had been another girl, once, to whom he made love—who —

HELEN. I wouldn't care. I know he loves me now, and I love him and trust him. What if there was another girl, once,—though I don't believe there ever was—why—do you suppose I should hold that against him, if he has forgotten her, and found out that it's—it's me he loves, after all, instead of her?

ISABEL. But if he had deceived you—if he had never told you about her —

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HELEN. I wouldn't care. Why should he? If he told me he loved me now, and I believed him—as I do!—that would be enough for me. Because I love him, too—don't you see? And what is love worth, if—if it isn't that kind?

(She is very much in earnest, and ISABEL shows that she is impressed by her words and her attitude, her manner, which at first was somewhat hard and unsympathetic, beginning to change. She seems to admire HELEN, to sympathize with her, and to want to help her.)

ISABEL. My dear, you're a—a prize worth having. And now I want you to come with me.

HELEN. With you? Why,—where?

ISABEL. Home.

HELEN. Your—to your home?

ISABEL *(almost sadly, shaking her head)*. No; I am afraid I have no—no place you would really call the one “there's no place like.” No, my dear, to your home. Now—at once—before your father finds out that you left it, that you have been here.

HELEN. No, no; I can't go back.

ISABEL. But you must. If you love Seth Barrett, if you want to help him and do what is for his good and for your own happiness, you must go home, and at once. I will take you, and your father need not know that you have been gone.

(Enter ANGIE, L.)

ANGIE. May I come in now?

ISABEL. Yes. I have just been telling Miss Conant, Miss Barrett, that she must go home, at once, and that I will take her. Don't you think it is the best thing for her to do?

ANGIE. Yes. I told her it was. Yes, Helen dear, you must do it. I know how hard it is for you, but you must—for Seth's sake—for your own.

HELEN. Y-yes, I—I see. I suppose I was wrong; I shouldn't have come, and I will go back. Even if father finds out I have been here, I will beg his forgiveness, and—and perhaps it will come out all right. I can wait. Yes, for Seth I can wait—I will—if it is for a thousand years!

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(She has brightened up, gained courage, and smiles hopefully. ANGIE is by her side, preparing her to go. ISABEL leads the way toward R.)

ANGIE. That's right, dear.

ISABEL. And spoken like a brave, noble girl. And I am sure you will never regret it. Come.

(She goes to R. with HELEN, ANGIE close to them, when ALAN rushes in R., and they start back in surprise.)

ANGIE. Why—Alan!

ALAN *(glancing at HELEN, then turning to ISABEL, with a denunciatory manner)*. Ah!—you! How dare you come here and talk to these innocent girls?

ISABEL. What do you mean, sir? How dare you speak to me like this?

ANGIE. Alan—why, Alan, do you know her?

(HELEN sinks into chair near table L. C. ALAN is R. C.; ISABEL and ANGIE, L.)

ALAN. Yes, I know her. I thought I recognized her the other day, and now I know who she is. I have seen her picture—in a theatrical paper—in tights!

ISABEL *(smiling, and biting her lips, leniently, but with a trace of sarcasm)*. That is indeed a terrible accusation, Mr.—Spencer, I believe? However, it has nothing to do with the question, just now —

ALAN. I think it has, when I find you here talking to these two young ladies. You are no fit associate for them, and I shall tell Mr. Barrett, and Miss Conant's father, that I have heard of you, and that what I have heard is not to your credit —

ISABEL. If you have any accusations to make against me, this is not the time nor place to do it. At present there is something else to think about. It is essential that Miss Conant should go home as quickly as possible, and I have volunteered to take her there.

(ISABEL is R.; ALAN, C.; ANGIE and HELEN, L. C.)

ALAN. You needn't put yourself out. I think Miss Conant will permit me to act as her escort.

(Crosses, looking questioningly at HELEN.)

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HELEN (*regarding him somewhat coldly and crossing to ISABEL*). Thank you; but—I—I will accept Miss Underwood's offer.

(*ALAN looks at her in surprise, somewhat crestfallen.*)

ANGIE (*inclined to resent the snub thus given ALAN*). Why, Helen, I should think ——

ISABEL (*with a glance of veiled triumph at ALAN*). Then shall we go at once, Miss Conant?

HELEN (*with her toward R.*). Yes.

(*Enter SETH, R.; he shows surprise as he sees ISABEL and HELEN.*)

SETH. Miss Underwood—you here? And Helen!

HELEN (*going to him*). Oh, Seth, I was so miserable, and I ran away. But I will go back. I will obey my father, and wait. I know now that it will be for the best.

SETH. Yes, dear.

(*He smiles at her encouragingly, then looks at ISABEL questioningly.*)

ISABEL. I came here hoping to see you, Mr. Barrett, and ——

HELEN. It was she who advised me to go home, to obey my father, and to wait.

SETH. I fail to understand, Miss Underwood, why you should have anything to say in the matter, or interest yourself in our affairs. I think, under the circumstances—the less we have to say to each other, the better.

(*The door-bell rings loudly.*)

ANGIE (*she and ALAN are L.*). Why, Seth, who can that be?

HELEN. My father!

SETH. Never mind, dear; be brave. It will be all right.

(*Enter LOBELIA, L., crossing to R.*)

LOBELIA. Laws o' mussy, sutt'nly am some busy times 'round yuh dis ebenin'.

(*Exit, R.*)

HELEN. Oh, Seth, I am sorry. I am to blame ——

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(*He comforts her. Exeunt ALAN and ANGIE, L. ISABEL is R. ; SETH, C. ; HELEN, L. C.*)

(*Enter DAVID, R., followed by LOBELIA, who goes to L., and stands listening.*)

DAVID (*down to C.*). I have come for my daughter. (*Sees HELEN.*) Ah,—I thought so. (*Crosses to HELEN, seizes her arm or wrist roughly.*) Come with me.

HELEN. Yes, father.

DAVID (*to SETH*). I knew she was here all the time. Pretty work you're up to. But you'll find what it means to entice a girl away from her home and encourage her to go against her own father.

(*Exit LOBELIA, L.*)

SETH. You don't understand, Mr. Conant. You wrong me. But I think another time —

DAVID. No—now. You are harboring my daughter against my wishes, and I'll make you suffer for it. (*To HELEN.*) Come.

ISABEL. Wait. I have something to say. I was here, and —

DAVID. Yes, I see you're here, and I'd like to know what for—in his house. Things look mighty queer to me, and I guess when this gets out—h'm —

(*Sneers, with a knowing smile of gloating triumph.*)

SETH. You are on the wrong tack, 'squire. If you will calm down a little —

DAVID. Oh, there'll be plenty of time to calm down, don't you fear ; and I guess when it comes out that you have this woman here, and that you lured my daughter away from home —

HELEN (*advancing to front, forgetting her fear and facing him indignantly*). Father ! You mustn't speak of Seth like that. It's not true—not a word of it—and I won't let you accuse him of such things. He didn't lure me here. I came of my own accord, when he didn't know it, and after he had told me to stay home and obey you. I came because I couldn't stand your hardness—yes, your cruelty—and you shan't accuse him. If you do—

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if you treat him like this—I shall never go home—never—I don't care what you do to me.

DAVID (*who has been staring at her, for a moment too surprised and angry to speak*). You—how dare you speak to me like this? I'll teach you. I'll show you whether you can defy me — (*Goes, again seizes her, and attempts to draw her toward R.*) Come.

ISABEL (*stepping in front of door R., barring his way*). Wait. I said I have something to say, and now you shall listen to me.

(*HELEN has separated herself from DAVID, now stands C. ; DAVID, R. C. ; ISABEL gets between them. SETH, L. C.*)

(*Enter ALAN, L.*)

DAVID. You! How dare you touch my daughter, a woman like you?

ISABEL. Be careful. Don't go too far. A woman like me generally knows what she is doing, and she isn't afraid of—a—man—like—you!

DAVID (*scornfully*). Ha!

ALAN (*coming to C.*). I can tell you what sort of woman she is, Mr. Conant. I've heard of her, I've seen her pictures. She is an actress—an adventuress—a notorious woman. Ask her—ask her if she can deny it.

ISABEL (*looking at him disdainfully, but with slightly amused indulgence*). Oh, you poor boy! You mean all right. But never mind. I deny nothing. It isn't worth while. I see—there's no chance for a—"a woman like me." (*Goes to R.*) Oh, very well. But you might ask him (*indicating DAVID*)—him—if he doesn't know who I am, and what I am—ha!—and why I am here! That's all—for the present. Good-night.

(*Gives them all a sweeping glance, which dwells with an instant's tenderness on HELEN; then, with her head up, haughtily exits R. The others look at her in silence, amazed; HELEN, as if in protest, starts toward R., but DAVID stops her.*)

DAVID. Here—see here! Are you going to stay here—with him—or are you coming with me? Remember, if you stay now, you can never cross my threshold again—I'm done with you. Which shall it be?

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HELEN. Why, father, I——

(She falters, shrinks from him and approaches SETH and looks pleadingly at him. He stands C., regarding her compassionately, but in silence, offering her no encouragement. She pauses, clasps her hands, again looks at SETH, turns, bows her head, as if in resignation, then raises it with some show of spirit and determination, and exits R., without looking back. Enter ANGIE L., in time to witness above, followed by LOBELIA, who stands up L., raises her hands, muttering "Laws o' mussy!" etc. ALAN and ANGIE L. C.; SETH, C., DAVID R. C. DAVID gives SETH a triumphant look and is about to speak, when the latter silences him, throwing off his air of submission and turning upon DAVID with fierce denunciation.)

SETH. And now, David Conant, you may go! This is my house, and there is no room in it for you. You have accused me of things of which you know I am innocent, you have tried to use your daughter to coerce and intimidate me, you have hired that woman to come here and rake up some story against me—but I tell you I'm not afraid of you, of her, nor of anybody. *(DAVID attempts to speak, but SETH shuts him off.)* I despise you and your lies—your low, underhanded methods—and I defy you. I'll win my fight, I'll win your daughter, fairly and squarely, in spite of you—in spite of everything. But I want nothing more to do with you. Go, I say! Go—go!

(DAVID, livid with rage, has been trying to speak, but SETH has overwhelmed and silenced him, forcing him to door, and finally off R., shutting door after him and standing with his back against it, with flashing eyes and set face. He is oblivious to the others, who stand L., regarding him, ALAN and ANGIE somewhat dismayed, but with admiration; LOBELIA holding up hands and wringing them, muttering to herself.)

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE.—*Same as Acts I and II, the next forenoon. Discover MRS. D., seated R.; LOBELIA seated L., fanning herself with large palm leaf fan. SETH is at desk, looking under papers, in drawers, etc.*

MRS. D. Land, Lobelia, you warm? I don't think it's so awful hot.

LOBELIA. Ah does. On mah way to de sto', 'n' got so het up Ah jes' had t' stop yuh fo' minute 'n' res' mah-se'f. (*Looks at SETH.*) Wha' yo' done look'n' fo', Mass' Seff?

SETH. Some letters I seem to have mislaid. Perhaps Dan —— (*Leans out of window; calls.*) Dan! Dan, come here a minute.

MRS. D. Seems t' me that boy don't tend t' business much t' speak of. Nice lawyer he'll make.

SETH. Oh, Dan's a bright youngster, all right; but boys will be boys, you know, Mrs. Dill.

MRS. D. Yes, 'n' most of 'em 'll be nuisances.

(*Enter DAN, R., flushed with exercise.*)

DAN. Want me, Mr. Barrett?

SETH. Yes; if you can spare a moment from that ball game. Have you seen anything of two or three letters I left here yesterday?

DAN (*alarmed, but trying to hide his confusion*). L-letters?

SETH. Yes, letters. There was one in particular that I wouldn't have certain parties get hold of for a thousand dollars ——

MRS. D. Land, that must have be'n an important one.

SETH. It was—and is. I'm afraid somebody picked them up, and if they did, and that one ——

(*He continues searching; MRS. D. and LOBELIA rise and join search.*)

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DAN. Mebbe they fell in the waste-basket.

(*Looks in basket.*)

SETH. I don't see how they could. Now, let—me—
see ——— Conant was here. Conant—Ferguson—
that—by Jove, I wonder if she ———

MRS. D. You mean that actress? I wouldn't put it past her.

DAN. Oh, she didn't take 'em—not those ones.

SETH. How do you know she didn't? What do you know about it—eh?

DAN. N-nothing, Mr. Barrett. That is, I mean—y' see, I was here, 'n'—I mean I was out there, lookin' in the window, and—and if she'd took 'em ———

SETH. I don't suppose she did. Run along and finish your game. Maybe they're at the house.

LOBELIA. Ah didn' see nuffin ob 'em.

(DAN *lingers by door, as if wanting to speak, but looks at MRS. D. and LOBELIA doubtfully, hesitates, then exits*
R. SETH *risés, about to go.*)

SETH. I'll go home and look once more. They must be there. Anything you wanted to see me about, especially, Mrs. Dill?

MRS. D. No, they ain't. Jest dropped in t' 'nquire about politics.

SETH. Oh, that's it? No more—er—legal business, then?

MRS. D. No. He's doin' pretty well lately. Good land, he'd jump over the barn t' please me, if I wanted him to.

LOBELIA. Don' b'lebe he could do it.

MRS. D. Wal, he'd try.

SETH. That would be quite a feat.

LOBELIA. Feet? Ah reckon it'd take wings. He! he! Guess it gwine be some time fo' yo' Sam Dill gits wings!

MRS. D. Wal, I guess he'll be an angel as soon as you will.

SETH. I hope so. We can't spare Lobelia yet a while.
(*Going.*) If anybody asks for me, tell them I'll be right back. I must go and look for that letter.

LOBELIA (*rising*). Ah'll come raight 'long 'n' help, soon's Ah be'n t' dat sto'.

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SETH. Don't hurry. I won't need any help. (*About to go off R., pauses.*) Why—m'm—here comes Miss Underwood. (*Crosses to L.*) Think I'll skip out this other way. Don't care to see her just now.

(*Exit quickly, L.*)

MRS. D. (*looking off R.*). Yes, here she comes—that actress. I wonder what she wants here.

LOBELIA (*rising, looking off*). Laws o' mussy, is she? Ah reckon Ah'll be gwine 'long.

MRS. D. Huh! I guess I wouldn't let her scare me. Stay 'n' see what she's got t' say. Mebbe we c'n find out what she's up to.

(*Enter ISABEL R.; she pauses up R. C.; MRS. D. is C., LOBELIA L. C.*)

ISABEL. Oh,—good-morning. I was looking for Mr. Barrett. Isn't he in?

MRS. D. Don't seem t' be. I guess if he was you'd see him. Seems t' me you have a good deal of business at the lawyer's office.

ISABEL. Why,—er—if I have? Isn't that what lawyers' offices are for?

MRS. D. Oh! I s'pose they be.

LOBELIA. He! he! Mebbe yo' wants a d'vo'ce?

(*Looks meaningly at MRS. D.*)

MRS. D. You needn't fling out. It ain't everybuddy 't's got a husband t' git divorced from. (*To ISABEL.*) Of course, it ain't none o' my business what you're here for, 'n' I ain't one o' the pryin' kind, but—well, it's makin' consid'able talk, 'n' I d' know but it's my duty t' tell y', 'f y' don't know, that Dave Conant's doin' everything in his power, no matter how low it is, t' beat Seth Barrett, 'n' it looks like he was usin' you as a tool. I hope it ain't with your consent. If it is—well, I reckon you can guess my opinion!

ISABEL (*down R.*). Thank you for the warning, Mrs.—m'm—Dill. But let me assure you, I am nobody's "tool," and—I am on Seth—Mr.—Barrett's side.

MRS. D. You want him to win?

ISABEL. I do. Yes,—with all my heart.

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LOBELIA. Does yo', honey? Does yo' mean it?

ISABEL. Yes, I mean it. And I think I have a trick up my sleeve that will do it, too.

LOBELIA. Up yo' sleeve? Laws o' mussy! (*Examines ISABEL's sleeve.*) Whar is it?

ISABEL (*laughing*). It's there, all right. Just you wait. I have an appointment with Mr. Barrett here, at eleven o'clock, and I sent word for Mr. Conant to be here at a quarter past. If you want to come back, say about a quarter of twelve or thereabouts, perhaps you'll be surprised.

MRS. D. Come back? I see. That means you want us t' go?

ISABEL. N-o, I didn't mean that exactly. But—if you would, you see —

MRS. D. Well, I d' know what you're up to, 'n' I ain't got much faith in—actresses—from what I've heard tell of 'em, but—we'll go. Won't we, Lobelia?

LOBELIA. Reckon we will. Ah's got t', anyhow. Got t' go to de sto'. Gwine stop on mah way back, dough, t' see 'bout dat s'prise. (*To ISABEL, warmly, as she goes up.*) Don' car' 'f yo' is a' actress, missy, Ah kind o' laks de way yo' talks. 'N' Ah's jes' a-dyin', Ah is, t' see what 'tis yo' got up dat sleebe.

(*Exit, R.*)

MRS. D. She ain't got any too much sense. But then, what can y' expect? Well, I'll be goin' too, seein' you're s' anxious for me to. I hope you mean what y' say, 'n' the way folks are talkin' ain't the truth —

ISABEL. So they are talking, are they? And nothing very complimentary about me, I dare say.

MRS. D. Oh, I wouldn't say that, exactly. I guess you've had compliments enough, 's fur's that goes—especially from the men—but—well, seein' you come here 'n' had dealin's with Dave Conant 'n'—well, as I said, I ain't one of the pryin' kind, 'n' I don't meddle in other folks' business—but of course, folks will talk, 'n' all. But I'm willin' t' give y' the benefit of the doubt, as the sayin' goes.

ISABEL. Thank you.

(*ISABEL is up C., by desk. MRS. D., about to go out R., meets SAM, as he enters.*)

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MRS. D. Why, Sam Dill, what you doin' here? I thought I left you home, shellin' peas?

SAM. Got 'em all shelled, 'n' thought I'd come 'n' look for you. Lonesome.

MRS. D. The idee! It's a pity if I can't be out of your sight five minutes 't you don't have t' look me up.

SAM. More 'n half an hour, Janey dear, 'n' I b'gun t' think mebbe somethin' 'd happened to y'.

MRS. D. Good land, what could happen? You make me p'rvoled. (*To ISABEL.*) That's jest the way he acts, sence we made up the last time. Tags me around like he was afraid I'd git stole. I d'clare, I d' know but too much love 's worse 'n not enough.

ISABEL (*smiling*). I'm sure you ought to be thankful for such a devoted husband, Mrs. Dill, and appreciate him. What if some woman not so fortunate should steal him away from you?

SAM. Yes, Jane; think o' that.

MRS. D. I ain't worryin'. I guess they'd soon be willin' t' give y' back. But I'd like t' see some woman try it! She'd find out that Sam Dill ain't the hull fam'ly, 'n' 't she'd have me t' reckon with. (*Going.*) Come on, Sam; if y' don't, I might git kidnapped.

(*Exit, R.*)

SAM. All right, Jane, I'm a-comin'. (*Pauses R.*) Fine woman, my Jane; but kind o' touchy. Have t' be careful not t' rub her the wrong way. Loves me, though; know she does.

ISABEL. Yes, Mr. Dill, I am sure she does. And I can see that you love her, too. But, do you know, it isn't always best to let a woman know she's too sure of you.

SAM. Guess Jane knows she's sure o' me, all right.

ISABEL. That's just it. Don't neglect her, but don't let all the love making come from your side —

SAM. 'F I didn't, I guess mebbe they wouldn't be none. You don't know Jane.

(*Mrs. D. appears R., out of breath.*)

MRS. D. Good land, Sam Dill, ain't you ever comin'? It don't look none too well, hangin' back here t' talk to another woman.

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SAM. Sure, Jane, I'm a-comin'. (*Goes R.*) Jest sayin' good-bye t' this lady. (*To ISABEL.*) Good-bye, Miss; hope t' see y' agin.

(*Exit, R.*)

MRS. D. Oh, y' do, eh? Well, we'll see about that. The idee!

(*Tosses her head and exits R., indignantly. ISABEL laughs; goes to window, looking out. Enter ALAN and ANGIE R.*)

ISABEL (*coming to C.*). Good-morning.

ALAN (*bowing, rather distantly*). Isn't Mr. Barrett here?

ISABEL. No —

ANGIE. Good-morning, Miss Underwood. We just dropped in to see Seth a minute. Making plans for a picnic, you know, and I've been teasing Seth to go. He declares he can't—says he has picnic enough on his hands as it is. But I tell him it would distract his mind—and goodness knows he has enough to worry him. I think he ought to go. Don't you, Alan?

ALAN. I suppose he knows best about what he can do, and being a lawyer and running for office — Of course, we want him to go, but I don't suppose he is in just the spirit for such things. (*Goes up, looks out of window.*) I wonder where he is.

ANGIE (*up by his side, also looking out*). I can't imagine. There's Dan. Ask him. (*Calls.*) Dan! Dan! Where's Seth? Oh, he doesn't hear me. I'll run out and ask him. (*Goes R.*) He ought to know.

(*Exit, R.*)

ISABEL (*to ALAN, who stands by window, ignoring her*). Mr. Spencer, I—I have been wishing for a chance to have a word with you.

ALAN (*turning, coolly*). Well?

ISABEL. I know you haven't a very good opinion of me, and that you think I am here for no good purpose, but I mean to prove to you that you are mistaken. Since I came I have had my eyes opened, I have seen what real love and trust are, or may be, and I—I—well, I

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have changed, somehow. I want to do something right—something good—and I want you to help me. Will you?

ALAN (*who has come down, much interested as she progresses, and with a softened manner*). Why, yes, of course I will, Miss Underwood, if what you say is true; if you will tell me what I can do, and how. But I don't understand.

ISABEL. Of course you don't, and there isn't time for an explanation now. (*Looks about, anxiously.*) But I assure you, I promise you you will not be sorry. What I want you to do is to go and get Miss Conant and bring her here, as soon as possible——

ALAN. Bring her here—Miss Conant? But why—what for?

ISABEL. That's where you must trust me. Just go, bring her, unknown to anybody, and produce her when I give you the signal. (*Looks L.*) Isn't there another room there?

ALAN (*going and looking off L.*). Yes.

ISABEL. And another outside entrance?

ALAN. Yes.

ISABEL. Good. Keep her in there till I tell her to appear.

ALAN. But if she won't come——? She has promised her father, you know——

ISABEL. Tell her it means her happiness—and his——

ALAN. Mr. Barrett's?

ISABEL. Yes. And she will come. Go now; there is no time to lose.

(*Enter ANGIE, R.*)

ANGIE. Come on, Alan. Guess we'd better be going.

ALAN. All right. (*To ISABEL, close to her.*) M'm—may I tell her? (*Indicates ANGIE.*)

ISABEL. Of course. Take her with you.

ANGIE (*inclined to be jealous*). Well, if you don't want to come——

ALAN. Of course I do. (*Goes up.*) I have something to tell you.

ANGIE. H'm! I should hope so!

(*Tosses her head, with a suspicious glance at ISABEL; he urges her out, reassuringly.*)

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ALAN. Now, that's all right. I'll explain, and ——

ANGIE. Yes, but I don't see ——

(*They go off R. ISABEL by window, looking out. She should seem somewhat changed from previous act, having a more womanly and sympathetic manner, except at times in her attitude toward DAVID. After pause, enter DAVID, R., followed by JAMES.*)

DAVID. Oh, you're here—alone? Glad of it. Time we had a little talk.

ISABEL (*down to C.*). I quite agree with you, Mr. Conant. It is.

JAMES. Seems t' me it's time something was done. Everything's going Seth Barrett's way.

DAVID. No such thing. Just a little spurt. There's the whole county to hear from, and I guess I haven't lost my hold yet. But see here, Miss Underwood, I didn't like the way you acted yesterday, and as for Barrett—well, the upstart actually turned me out of his house. He defies me—says he'll win in spite of me, and —— Huh! I'd like to see him. But there's no time to lose. When you going to turn that little trick?

ISABEL. Soon, Mr. Conant,—soon, I assure you; quite as soon as you possibly can desire.

DAVID. Well, the sooner the better. Of course, I'm not afraid, but—well, if you intend to earn that money ——

JAMES. That's what I say. All I hear is, "Seth Barrett, Seth Barrett," as if he was the greatest thing that ever happened. I tell you, it looks as if he ——

DAVID. Oh, give us a rest. Nobody wants your opinion. Besides, it's nothing but a lot of women and old fogies he's got on his side.

JAMES. Maybe you think so. But I hear lots of talk, and if it wasn't for this lady here, and what she can do to turn things against him—well, all I've got to say is, you'd better get a hustle on.

DAVID. Oh, shut up. Wait till the time comes and see what happens.

JAMES. Yes, but what happens may not be just what'll suit you, Dave Conant.

DAVID. Oh, shut up. Do you think you can scare me? Now, Miss Underwood, I want to know what you intend to do.

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ISABEL. M'm—well,—if I may speak to you alone for a moment? (*Glances at JAMES.*)

DAVID. Sure. Jim, you go outside and take a smoke.

JAMES. Oh, all right! Seein' you're so blamed secret —

(*Exit, R.*).

DAVID. Now, what is it? Speak up. Somebody may come any minute.

ISABEL. It won't take me long to say what I have to say.

I just want to tell you that I've changed my mind —

DAVID. Changed your mind?

ISABEL. Yes. A woman's privilege, you know.

DAVID. You — I don't understand.

ISABEL. I mean just this, Mr. Conant, that since I came here I have had my eyes opened. I'm—well, I'm not the same woman you saw in New York—the one you hired to lend herself to your schemes, with such glowing promises. Oh, I know—I agreed—I wanted money, and it looked like an easy way to get it. But money isn't everything, Mr. Conant, and I've found out there's something else far better and more worth while. I've seen what true manhood is, and also what pure, sweet young womanhood is, and what it means to have a good and noble man love you. I've never had that experience, but—well, I don't mean to help cheat some other woman out of it.

DAVID. Oh, what's all this about, anyway? What's got into you? You want more money?

ISABEL. No, I don't want money—not your money. I want my self-respect and the good opinion of those who, because of my association with you, think me bad and unscrupulous. I'm not—I'm not bad—I don't mean to be—but I haven't had a chance! But I have a chance now to do a good act, and I mean to do it. I mean to make you treat your daughter the way she deserves to be treated, David Conant, and to stand no longer in the way of her happiness. I mean to see you give her to the man she loves —

DAVID. Are you crazy? You think —

ISABEL. I think you will tell your daughter that she may be Seth Barrett's wife, and tell him that you give your consent.

DAVID. What's got into you? You came here under an agreement to expose Barrett's past, to disgrace him and put him out of the race against me. That's what I promised to pay you for, and now—now you tell me I must—— Ha! you must be crazy. I don't understand what's put any such notion into your head, but whatever it was, you might as well get it out again. You needn't think you can scare me with your lofty talk and your high notions. No,—ma'am!

ISABEL. What put it into my head, David Conant, was your own daughter—that poor, unhappy and misused girl, who trembles at her own father's name and hides herself when she hears him coming. That's the kind of father you are—a tyrant—a man who, for his own selfish ends, would break his own daughter's heart! But I tell you, you shan't do it!

DAVID. You! You,—what can you do? You'd better attend to your own affairs, if you know when you're well off. What are you? Ha!

ISABEL. We'll let that pass. Just now I have only this to say—you will give your consent to your daughter's marriage to Seth Barrett, and give him a fair and square deal in this political business—or I will tell all I know about you—how you heard in some way that I had known Mr. Barrett years ago, when he was nothing but a silly young boy infatuated with an actress who took advantage of his greenness and almost made a fool of him. But it didn't amount to anything—he was innocent, he never did anything that he need be afraid to have the whole world know——

DAVID. But you said you had letters—you led me to think that you—that he——

ISABEL. I saw your scheme, David Conant, and that you were an unprincipled man, equal to any villainy to carry your own point—and I met your cunning with some of my own. And I mean to show you up good and plenty, if you don't do what's right.

DAVID. Pshaw! Go ahead. What can you do?

ISABEL. I can go to your opponents—to the newspapers—and tell them the plot to ruin Seth Barrett, and how you promised to pay me five hundred dollars to enter into the conspiracy, and—— Oh, I can do plenty, and you know it. I don't mean to—I don't want to—

if you agree to what I ask. Otherwise—well, leave it to me.

DAVID. You wouldn't dare do it. Nobody would believe you, if you did. (*He cannot quite conceal the fact that he is worried, but tries to bluff her.*) A woman of your stamp—who had agreed to—— Pshaw, you're just trying to follow your trade and be theatrical; but you can't scare me.

ISABEL. Very well. But as sure as I stand here, I mean it, and you haven't money enough to stop me, if you refuse to do what I say. I believe you would sell your soul for money and power—to rule—to have others under your heel. But I've had my eyes opened, I see through you, and I mean to do a little bit toward putting you down a peg or two where you belong.

DAVID (*beginning to hedge, but still putting on an air of defiance*). What do you intend to do—what do you flatter yourself you can do?

ISABEL. I told you. What I can tell will make good reading, and will help destroy what chance you have of winning the office you are so bound to have. (*She stands where she can see out of window, and now sees ALAN and ANGIE, with HELEN, pass from R. to L. They merely glance in and hurry past window. DAVID does not see them.*) What is your decision?

DAVID. You have it.

(*Enter JAMES, R.*)

JAMES. Say, what's all this about? I'm tired of waiting. When you coming, 'squire?

DAVID. Now. (*Goes R.*) Now, Jim. But first I want you to look at this woman here. Do you see her?

JAMES. Sure I do. (*Looks at ISABEL.*) Think I'm blind?

DAVID. You thought she was a pretty sensible sort of woman, didn't you? A woman 't knew which side her bread was buttered on?

JAMES. Why, yes,—sure. Seems to be.

DAVID. Well, she isn't; she's a fool—the biggest fool of a woman that ever lived. She thinks she can bluff me—scare me—and make me do something I don't want to do. Don't that prove what a fool she is, Jim Ferguson? You know me, and I guess—— Ha! she ain't

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worth noticing. Come on, Jim. We'll find better company and a more profitable way to spend our time.

(*Gives ISABEL a sarcastic, half-defiant look, and exits R. JAMES lingers, watching till DAVID is out of sight, then goes and speaks to ISABEL.*)

JAMES. What's all this about, Miss Underwood? What's up? Haven't had a break with the boss, have you?

ISABEL. He may be your "boss," but he isn't mine. Thank heaven I have a little self-respect left yet, and it isn't too late to prove it.

JAMES. But I don't understand. Ain't you goin' to carry out that little contract?

ISABEL. No. I still have a contract on hand, but it's not that one. Ask him what it is, if you want to know.

JAMES. What! Do you mean to say you've flopped—gone over to the other side?

ISABEL. Yes, that's what I've done—"flopped," gone over to the side of honesty and decency.

JAMES. Whew! Well, if women don't beat all! (*Goes R., then comes back to C., near ISABEL, speaking confidentially to her, with a timid look off R.*) Say, Miss Underwood, to tell the truth—m'm—when you come right down to it, I don't think any more of him than you do. If it wa'n't that I have to watch out and see which side my bread's buttered on, why—I'd like to see him get it in the neck, myself. (*Goes R.*) Think he's going to, too, the way things look. You can't tell the boss anything—he's so sure of his own power—but if Seth Barrett don't come out ahead—well, I'll "eat my hat," as the boys say. 'N' I ain't worrying about having to do it, either.

(*Exit R. ISABEL goes R., looking after him, smiling, then walks L. and meets ALAN, as he enters L.*)

ALAN. She's here. Didn't want to come, at first, because she had promised to obey her father and wait, but we told her she must come, and she did. I hope it comes out all right.

ISABEL. I mean that it shall, Mr. Spencer. Trust me.

ALAN (*doubtfully, then determinedly*). I—I—will.

ISABEL. Thanks.

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(*Enter ANGIE, L.*)

ANGIE. Helen's just about scared to death. She doesn't know what to make of it all, and she's so afraid she has done wrong coming here, that I don't know as I can keep her.

ISABEL. I will speak to her. I think I can convince her that it is right and for the best.

(*Exit, L.*)

ANGIE. Dear me, Alan, do you think we've done right?

ALAN. I hope so. I don't know what to think of that woman, but she seems sincere, and—well, somehow I just had the feeling that she meant all right and that we ought to do as she said, and—now I'm going to see it through.

ANGIE. So am I. But what if it goes wrong, and Seth blames us, and—and tells you that you can't—that I can't — Oh, Alan, what if he does?

ALAN. Now, little pessimist, don't begin to look for trouble before it's anywhere in sight. I've had a talk or two with that big brother of yours, and I think I have nearly convinced him that I'm not the worst fellow in the world, and that I may in time prove worthy even of—of winning you, you little darling!

ANGIE. Oh, Alan!

(*He is about to kiss her, but desists suddenly, and she at the same time draws away from him, holding up a warning finger.*)

ALAN. M'm—that's the time I 'most forgot again. We promised, didn't we? Well, it's a promise that's all-fired hard to keep, that's all I've got to say.

(*Enter SETH, R.*)

SETH. Aha, here you two are again. How does this happen —

ALAN. Why, you see—we —

ANGIE. Yes, Seth—you see—we—we came to see if we couldn't persuade you to go to the picnic, and—don't you think you can, Seth? We have postponed it, you know.

ALAN. Yes, Mr. Barrett, do!

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SETH. Pshaw! You know I can't spend time to go to a picnic. Besides, I guess you'd have a better time if I wasn't along. Looks that way to me.

ALAN. Do you mean, Mr. Barrett, that we—that you—that you give—your—your—consent?

SETH. Consent to what? That you go on a picnic? Of course. Hope you enjoy it. (*Up by desk, looking about.*) It's the strangest thing what ever became of those letters. Where's Dan?

ANGIE. He was out there playing ball a little while ago.

ALAN (*going to SETH, speaking earnestly, half aside to him*). M'm—I've got the ring here, Mr. Barrett. (*Feels in pocket, taking out diamond engagement ring.*) Will you let me put it on?

SETH. Do you think it'll fit? (*Sticks out his finger.*)

ALAN. Y-yes,—the finger it's intended for. Eh, Angie?

ANGIE. Oh, Alan! (*Looks imploringly at SETH, in wistful confusion.*) Oh, Seth!

SETH. Oh, Angie! Oh, Alan! Oh, my! (*Hesitates, as if to tease them, then takes ANGIE's hand and gives it to ALAN.*) You might try it on—and see! (*They look at him, in amazed surprise, too happy to speak.*) Now run along, children; I have work to do.

(ALAN and ANGIE are R. C., SETH up by desk.)

ALAN (*as if to kiss ANGIE, looking at SETH*). M'm—can I?

SETH. You look as if you could. I have, lots of times.

(ALAN kisses ANGIE, just as LOBELIA appears in window and sees them.)

LOBELIA. Laws o' mussy!

(ALAN and ANGIE run off R.)

SETH. Hello, Lobelia; where'd you come from?

LOBELIA. Jest down t' de sto'. (*She has a few packages.*) Gwine home now, purt soon. Say, Mass' Seff, yo' gwine let 'm hab 'er?

SETH. Who—(*nodding off R.*) him?

LOBELIA. Yassah. Yo' gwine let 'im take Miss Angie 'way frum yuh?

SETH. Not yet a while, Lobelia. We can't spare her for a

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long time yet, but some time—well, I have found out that he's a fine fellow, after all—from a good family, well off, and—as Angie seems to love him, and he seems to love her, and—well, what you going to do?

LOBELIA. Oh, dis lub! Ain' dat jes' de way it goes? An' yo', Mass' Seff, what 'bout yo'? Ain' you gwine hab no lub—yo' 'n' Miss Helyun?

SETH. Oh, Lobelia, why, of course we are, all the love in the world. That'll come out all right, don't you worry. We may have to wait a while, but it will be worth waiting for. There, now, you trot along home, or we won't have any dinner.

LOBELIA. Trot? Laws o' mussy, wha' yo' take me fo'; t'ink I'se gwine trot? He! he! Guess mah trott'n' days done gone by. He! he! Laws o' mussy! Trot!

(She disappears to L. SETH stands looking out of window after her, laughing; after a pause turns, sees ISABEL, who enters L.)

SETH. Miss Underwood! Here!—you?

ISABEL. Yes. I told you I should be here, and that I should have something to say, and something to give you. What I have to say, Mr. Barrett, is this—I want you to forgive me for anything I have said, anything that I may have seemed to do, or to be about to do, to injure you. I am sorry. I am going away—to-day—back to New York—and you will never see me nor hear from me again. And what I have to give you is this—these. *(Opens hand-bag, takes out packet of letters, and offers them to him.)* Take them—they are yours.

SETH. I don't understand. Only yesterday —

ISABEL. I know. Only yesterday—a few days ago—I was a different woman. Since then—well, something has come over me. I have had my eyes opened. Another woman has appealed to me—her tenderness, her innocence, her sorrow, and — Oh, I don't suppose you can understand—you won't believe me, perhaps, but it's true—it's true—and I mean to prove to you that I am sincere —

(He looks at her, doubtfully, not inclined wholly to believe in her. She stands R. C., he C. She is about to open

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hand-bag, when DAN runs in R., excited, with one hand behind him. He pauses, dismayed, when he sees ISABEL.)

SETH. Well, sir, what do you want?

DAN. N-nothing. I just—I was just ——

(He shows an inclination to retreat, but SETH detains him, noticing what is in hand behind his back.)

SETH. Wait a minute. You have something to tell me. What is this?

(Takes hold of his arm and reveals the hidden hand, which holds bunch of letters.)

DAN. Why, that's—that's them letters, Mr. Barrett. You see, I—I thought ——

SETH. Letters? What letters? Let's see.

(DAN gives him the letters, which he glances at, puzzled. ISABEL also is greatly surprised and interested. SETH unties letters, looks them over quickly, amazed.)

DAN. You see, she—she said she could ——

SETH *(handing letters to ISABEL, who takes them with bewilderment)*. I believe these belong to you.

ISABEL *(looking at letters)*. Why, these are—these are not ——

SETH. And now, sir, what have you to say for yourself? Where did you get those letters?

DAN. Why, I—I reached in the window and took 'em, when she said she could use 'em to hurt you, and I—I meant it all right, Mr. Barrett. I wanted to help you and get the best of her, and I thought ——

SETH. But these letters are not the ones I've been looking for, the ones that I must have. If the others ——
(Struck by a sudden suspicion, looking at ISABEL.) Ah —you ——

ISABEL *(taking other packet of letters from bag and handing them to him)*. Perhaps these ——

SETH *(looking at letters, finding the one most important letter, taking it from envelope)*. Ah—I see. You did take them. And this one—I suppose you have learned its contents. I might have known.

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ISABEL. No. You wrong me. I didn't even know that I had those letters in my possession. Even had I done so, I would not have used them against you.

SETH. Ho! A likely story. You didn't know ——

ISABEL. No. I thought they were the others—the letters I had when I came here—the ones you wrote to me, long ago.

SETH. Then how ——

DAN. That's so, Mr. Barrett. That's the truth. You see, I changed 'em. I took the others, so she couldn't use 'em against you, and grabbed up some others from the desk and put 'em in their place, so she wouldn't miss 'em—then I went and hid her bunch under the steps. I meant all right, Mr. Barrett, honest I did. I wanted to help you.

SETH (*unable to hide his amusement*). H'm—well, I guess you've helped me, all right. Now you'd better skedaddle. I'll attend to your case later.

(DAN *looks relieved, murmurs, "Honest I did," etc.; exit R.*)

ISABEL. Well!

SETH. Some kid, isn't he?

ISABEL. I should say so. If you had a few more champions like him, I guess —— But now I hope you believe me, and I want you to take these letters.

(*Offers him the original packet.*)

SETH. Thank you. They are yours. I don't want them.

ISABEL (*trying to make him take them*). But I want you to take them—just to show that you believe I am sincere —— (*He still refuses them, turning up to desk, looking at other letters; she unties her letters and one by one tears them into small bits, throwing pieces into waste-basket.*) There, they are gone. As for those others—you must believe me: I never looked at them—they never were out of my possession. Oh, I wish I could prove it. I want you to believe it—you shall!

(*Enter ANGIE, L., followed by ALAN. She looks off to R., in trepidation.*)

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ANGIE. Oh, Seth, here comes Mr. Conant, and I'm afraid
Helen — (Sees ISABEL, pauses.)

ALAN. Angie!

SETH. What is it? What about Helen?

ANGIE. Why, you see, she—we —

ALAN. Yes, Mr. Barrett, we —

(ISABEL has gone L.; exits just as DAVID enters R.)

DAVID. Oh, you're here, are you, Barrett? Glad of it. I hear my daughter was seen coming in this direction a few minutes ago. Don't you think you'd better produce her?

(He is R. C.; SETH, C.; ANGIE and ALAN, L.)

SETH. Your daughter is not here, Mr. Conant. I haven't seen her to-day.

DAVID. A likely story. She was seen coming in here, not ten minutes ago —

(He crosses to L., as if to go out there, but is stopped by ALAN.)

ALAN. Just one minute, please.

DAVID (*pushing him aside*). Stand aside! What have you got to say about it?

ANGIE (*stepping up to him, indignantly*). Don't you talk to him like that! He's my friend, and we—we're engaged, and —

DAVID. Huh!

(*Disdaining them, he is about to force his way out L., when he is met by ISABEL, leading HELEN, and falls back.*)

ISABEL. Here is your daughter, Mr. Conant, ready to claim your promise.

DAVID. Promise! I didn't make any promise. She'd better come with me —

HELEN. No, father, not unless—unless you give your consent —

SETH (*going to her*). Helen, what does this mean? Why are you here? You said you would be patient, and wait.

ISABEL. There is nothing to wait for, Mr. Barrett. Mr. Conant consents to give you his daughter. He realizes

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that her happiness lies with you, that he has made a mistake, and he wishes to atone. (*Turns to DAVID, speaking with deep meaning.*) Isn't that the case, Mr. Conant?

DAVID (*somewhat reluctantly, but realizing that he is cornered*). Oh, well, I—I suppose if she's so set on having him, and he wants her, and—and they're bound to have each other — (To SETH.) But I want you to understand that I'm doing it of my own free will, and that I still intend to beat you out in that election, if I can do it—and I can!—but I'm not going to have folks saying I don't care for my daughter, and that I stand in the way of her happiness, because of politics.

HELEN (*going to him, throwing her arms about his neck*). Oh, father! Father, you make me so happy!

(*He releases her, but not without a show of affection.*)

SETH. Thank you, 'squire; and I don't think you will regret it. After all, if—if I should beat you—and I mean to do it, you know, if I can—and I think I can! —(*this with a twinkle of amusement*) why, it'll be all in the family — You may not be a district attorney, but—you'll have one for a son-in-law.

DAVID (*not inclined to accept the argument, but still with a manner suggesting that he yields good-naturedly.*) H'm! Maybe I will, and—maybe I won't! I reckon a few of the voters will have something to say about that.

(*He has gone to R.; now, without another word and without looking at any of the others, exits quickly R., as if anxious to avoid further discussion. ISABEL walks to R. C., about to follow him. SETH is C., with HELEN by him; ALAN and ANGIE, L. C.*)

ISABEL. And now—will you say good-bye to me?

SETH. Why, yes, of course—and good luck to you.

(*He offers her his hand, which, after an instant's hesitation, and some emotion, she takes. Then, again about to go, she glances tenderly at HELEN, saying, "Good-bye." HELEN goes to her, kisses her.*)

ISABEL. Thank—you!

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(Without another word, but showing that she is deeply moved by HELEN's caress, she slowly exits R. HELEN looks after her, with an expression that shows something akin to tenderness. SETH also seems touched, and ALAN and ANGIE stand close together, L., looking on with sympathetic interest. HELEN goes to SETH.)

HELEN. Oh, Seth, we—we feel kindly toward her—and toward my father—and—and everybody—don't we?

SETH. Yes, dear—yes; toward all the world!

(He takes her in his arms; she buries her face on his shoulder and he kisses her on forehead. ALAN puts his arm about ANGIE, kisses her. SAM and MRS. D. appear in window, unnoticed, greatly surprised, but beaming joyfully; he attempts to kiss her, she cuffs him playfully, he persists and she lets him get the kiss. LOBELIA appears R., sees HELEN in SETH's arms, raises her hands, then clasps them together rapturously.)

LOBELIA. Laws o' mussy!

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